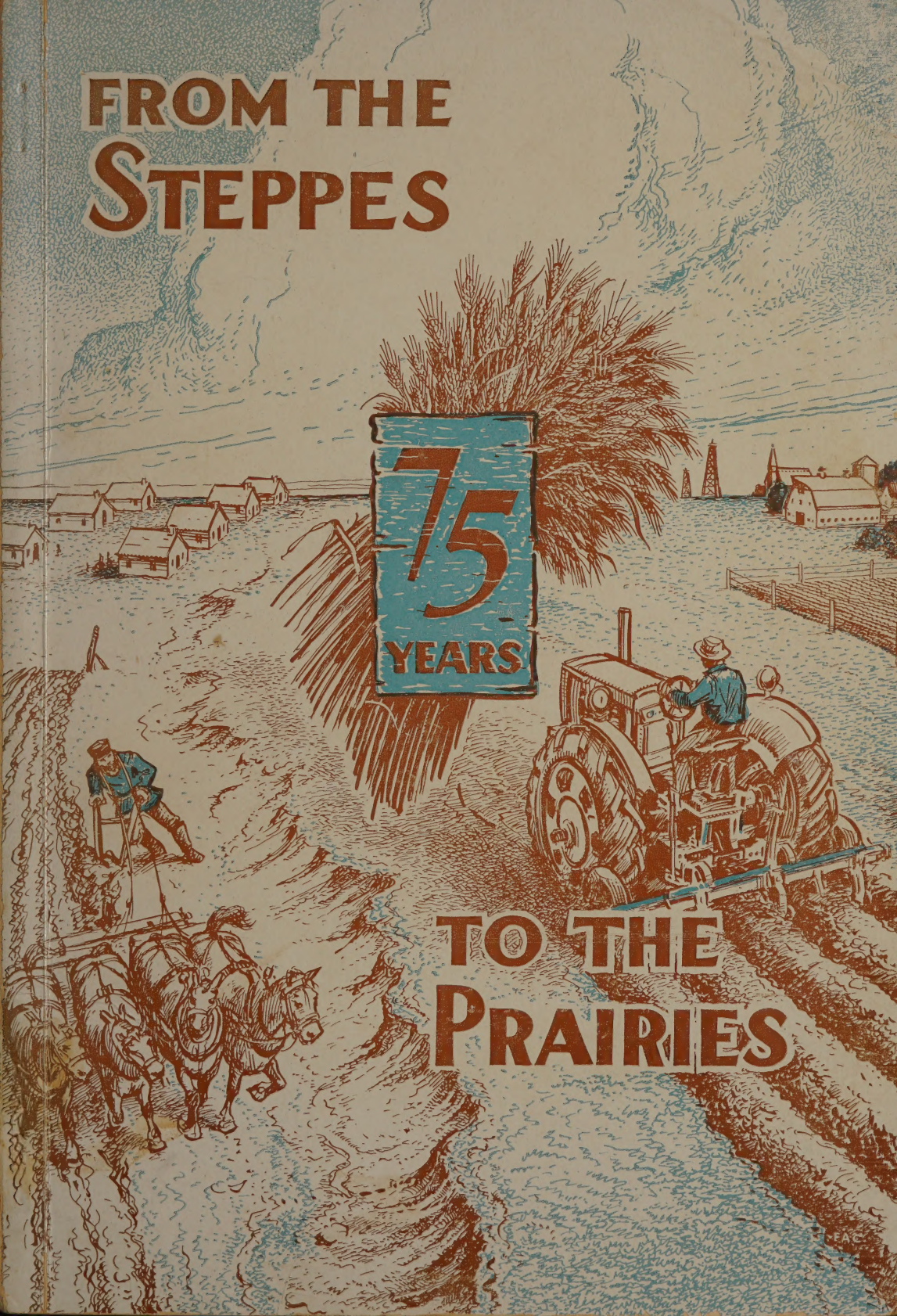


# FROM THE STEPPES

75  
YEARS

# TO THE PRAIRIES







HISTORICAL COMMITTEE SERIES

I

# From the Steppes to the Prairies

(1874 - 1949)

*Edited by*  
**Cornelius Krahn**

Under the auspices of  
THE HISTORICAL COMMITTEE  
of the  
General Conference of the Mennonite Church  
of North America  
1949

MEMBERS:

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Published by  
MENNONITE PUBLICATION OFFICE  
722 North Main Street  
Newton, Kansas

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722 North Main Street

Newton, Kansas

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



## Introduction

1949  
The year 1874 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the coming of the Mennonites to the prairie states and provinces. It is true, Mennonites had come to these regions before and continued to come afterwards, but it was during that year that the greatest wave of immigrants arrived. To help commemorate this event the Executive Committee of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America authorized the Historical Committee to publish a booklet for the purpose of deepening the appreciation of the sacrifices and contributions of our pioneer fathers.

Some of the material appearing in this book had been previously printed but most of it was written expressly for this occasion. Among the articles being reprinted are those by Noble L. Prentis in which he gives a delightful portrayal of the early Mennonite pioneers in Kansas.

Jacob Wiebe's account, written in an entirely different vein, is a simple and impressive narrative of the hardships of the pioneers.

The autobiography of Christian Krehbiel, who, as chairman of the Board of Guardians, the Mennonite Central Committee of that day, deserves much credit for aiding the Mennonite pioneers, appears in print for the first time. We are grateful to Mr. Edward Krehbiel for translating and editing this part of the diary and making it available for this occasion.

In the biography of John F. Funk by Kempes Schnell we are presenting another member of the Board of Guardians, rivaling with Christian Krehbiel in benevolence for the newly arrived pioneers. This presentation was made possible through a study of a wealth of material from the Funk archives of the Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen, Indiana.

The article on Jacob Y. Shantz by Melvin Gingerich presents a third Mennonite—one who did for the Mennonites of Manitoba what John F. Funk, Christian Krehbiel, and others did for the Mennonite pioneers in the states.

Men like C. Henry Smith (*The Coming of the Russian Mennonites*) and Georg Leibbrandt and Ernst Correll (*Mennonite Quarterly Review*) have done much to collect pertinent materials and interpret them. In a modest way this booklet indicates that there is more material that needs to be considered in the drama of 1874. In addition to the life story of John F. Funk, Christian Krehbiel, and Jacob Y. Shantz a thorough study of the contributions of Bernhard Warkentin, Cornelius Jansen, David Goerz, Leonhard Sudermann, Wilhelm Ewert, Jacob Buller, Dietrich Gaeddert, and others will have to be made.

Leland Harder in his essay places the Mennonites and their petitions, so warmly debated in the Senate, into the scene of American politics of that day, while Elmer Suderman relates how the Mennonite pioneer of the prairie states and provinces has fared in American literature.

It is a pleasure to mention among those who have made the appearance of this booklet possible: Mr. John F. Schmidt, Mrs. Henry Buller, and Mr. Bennie Bergen for their valuable assistance in preparing the manuscripts, proof reading, etc.

Cornelius Krahn.

July 29, 1949  
North Newton, Kansas





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DAVID GOERZ

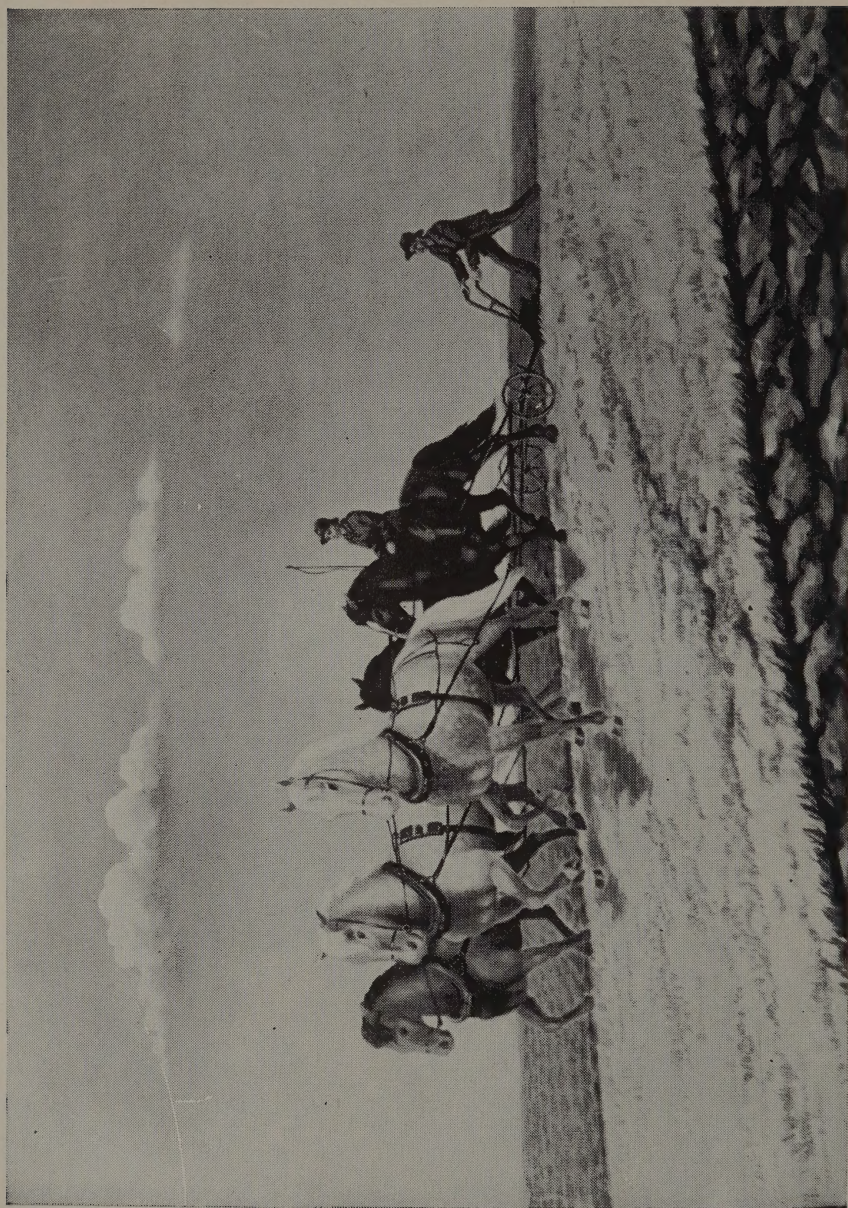
(1849-1914)

Opposite page: Scene in Immigrant House, Alexanderwohl, northwest of present-day Goessel, Kansas









Plowing the Steppes, by J. P. Klassen



# From the Steppes to the Prairies\*

By Cornelius Krahn

## THE UKRAINE

Some 180 years ago the Ukraine of Russia consisted of unbroken steppes like the prairies of the American Middle West 75 years ago. Catherine II and other rulers had extended their empire south and westward in wars with Turkey and Poland. Criminals, robbers, and other outlaws who feared the ever growing arm of Moscow, settled here at the "edge" (Ukraine) of the empire. Since the time of Peter the Great, Russia had opened her window more and more to the West. The sun of Western civilization began to shine more and more brightly through this window. Merchants, army officers, officials, doctors, craftsmen, manufacturers, and farmers of the West came to Russian cities, towns, and villages.

After the conquest of the Ukraine steady and efficient farmers were needed to colonize and utilize this vast newly acquired territory. Queen Elizabeth had settled some Greeks, Hungarians, and Bulgarians there, but the big scale colonization of the steppes began under Catherine II after the issuance of her manifestos of 1762 and 1763.

During the next years German colonies along the Volga, near St. Petersburg and in the Ukraine were established. In 1765 the Moravians established a mission station, Sarepta, in the province of Saratov. The Hutterites settled in Vyshenky, Tshernigov, in 1770, coming to America 100 years later. Some Swedes settled in the Ukraine in 1782, but their descendants returned to their home country after the Revolution.

Most of these colonization efforts were not an immediate success. The colonists were dissatisfied and the government did not find the expected results. Many of the to-be "model farmers" had never farmed. Furthermore they came to a country which had vegetation, climatic conditions, and markets, unknown to them. The government which had invited them knew little more about these important questions. All had to be learned the hard way under pioneer conditions.

After these first disappointing experiences it was stressed that in the future "exclusively good farmers," who knew how to cultivate grapes, mulberry trees and other useful plants and who were experienced in cattle raising, would be admitted. "Thus," says A. Klaus (*Nashi Colonii*, translated *Our Colonies*) "in the Ukraine, unlike at the Volga, not vagabonds appeared, but more or less experienced people, married and some with property." From Bessarabia along the coasts of the Black Sea and the Azov Sea settlements of German farmers appeared. They were Reformed and Lutheran Pietists, Catholics, and Mennonites. In the middle of the past century the foreign observer Haxthausen said about the latter: "Nowhere can one find a greater equality of men based on constitution (namely on a religious constitution) than among the Mennonites. Since agriculture is a religious duty no one can be more or less than a farmer. Each industry, handicraft and business subservient to this idea, is related to and connected with agriculture."

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\*Reprint from *The American-German Review*, Oct. and Dec. 1944.

### *From the Vistula to the Dnieper*

Dutch Mennonites left The Netherlands during the 16th century and settled along the European frontier of that time—the swampy Vistula Delta near Danzig. As experts in dike building and draining flooded territories they were welcome colonists. Here they had an opportunity to establish their “church without spot and wrinkle” and keep it separate from the “world” which had persecuted them in The Netherlands. For about two centuries they remained “untouched” by the surrounding civilization. With some exceptions they were privileged under Polish kings and under Prussian dukes and kings to maintain their cultural and religious integrity. They used the Dutch of their forefathers at home and in church. They were thrifty and prosperous. For them the term “brotherhood” was not a vague and distant ideal but a reality. It was not so much spoken of on Sunday, as practiced every day. They formed not merely a “spiritual” brotherhood but also a cultural and economic unit. Around 1750 Dutch had been completely abandoned and High German had become the language of the pulpit and literature while the Low German of the country became the every day language. This was the beginning of a gradual disintegration of the original Dutch Mennonite brotherhood along the Vistula River. In the assimilation into the surrounding Prussian civilization some of the religious principles were lost. Others were in danger of a like fate.

Several thousands of Mennonites left their homes in Danzig and Prussia to escape the “world” and to settle on the steppes of the Ukraine. Here, in an entirely heterogeneous civilization, they brought their German Mennonite culture and economic life to a full development. The *Old Colony* was settled by 228 families in 1789 at the mouth of the Chortitza River on the banks of the Dnieper, hence, referred to as the *Chortitza Colony*. The second, located some 100 miles to the southeast along the Molotschna River, was founded in 1803 and called the *Molotschna Colony*. The first years of pioneer life in the Old Colony were desperate. Even there most of the settlers had had no farming experience and were without means, because those with property had not been permitted to leave. The founders of the Molotschna Colony were mainly experienced farmers who brought more implements, furniture, money and other possessions with them. These, therefore, became the most successful settlers of the Ukraine. Klaus says, “Soon the Mennonites achieved among us a hitherto unknown prosperity and an excellent organization. On the steppes, where in previous times there had been no water or even one shrub, now rose, as if by magic, one prosperous settlement next to the other. There is plenty of well water, there are groves of orchard, mulberry and shade trees. In the well-kept pastures are herds of sheep, cattle, and horses of all kinds and excellent breeds.” What accounts for the beginning of this success? Mennonites had always been, in a way, “other worldly.” Because of their separation from the world, based on religious beliefs they became predominantly a rural people. Bible and plow became inseparable for them. Religious tradition and heritage made them good farmers. Thus agriculture became “a religious duty.” Had not God sent Adam forth “to till the ground?” This religious duty found an opportunity in the steppes of the Ukraine as nowhere else.

### Johann Cornies

The rapid development of the Molotschna Colony is due also to other factors. It cannot be imagined without the *Agricultural Association* the far reaching influence of which was due to a man named Johann Cornies. He was born near Danzig in 1789, the year in which the Old Colony was founded. At the age of 16 he arrived at the Old Colony with his parents and two years later went to the Molotschna Colony. On long and dangerous business trips from Molotschna to the Crimea he made some money with which he began to farm. His farm soon developed into a model farm, so that Alexander I, passing through the village was amazed. Later he left the village and settled on an estate, buying two others soon after. For a time sheep breeding was the main source of income and made him one of the richest men of the Ukraine. But that was not all. His estate became a model in all branches of agriculture and an experiment station. Excellent Dutch dairy cattle and high quality breeds of horses were raised here. In 1847 there were nearly 100,000 fruit and shade trees on his estates and a large nursery from which trees were shipped to distant places. His industries included cheese and brick factories and the production of tobacco, silk, and other commodities. The president in charge of all colonies in the Ukraine, E. von Hahn said: "The estate Juschanlee is a model of order and organization including most of the branches of agriculture and domestic equipment."

Because of his leadership ability, the government appointed him, at the age of 28, as representative of the Mennonites. He was as successful in conducting the affairs for the entire colony and even for the surrounding native population as he was in conducting his own. In 1830 the government created an *Association for the Improvement of Agriculture and Industry* among the colonists, which was later called the *Agricultural Association*. Cornies, the soul of this organization, remained its life-long chairman. Through this agency Cornies exercised a tremendous influence on the agricultural, economic, and educational development of the colonies both during his lifetime and after his death.

From the very beginning, in addition to the above mentioned branches of agriculture, each colonist cultivated some land. They had brought their primitive farm implements with them from Prussia, and their blacksmiths continued to supply the needs. Wagons, plows, harrows, flails, and forks were about all they had. Farming was done on a small scale. They raised rye, oats, barley, wheat, potatoes, and vegetables. Drought was a severe handicap and made farming risky. Cornies demonstrated that by means of summer fallow productivity of the soil could be increased and drought overcome. A foreign observer who noticed the difference between a Mennonite owned field that had been summer-fallowed and one that had not was heard to have exclaimed: "Why? Do the Mennonites have a different God?"

Through the efforts of Cornies, the breeds of sheep and cattle in the colonies were considerably improved and formed one of the main sources of income. Under the supervision of the *Agricultural Association* orchards and groves were planted. After twenty years in the forty-seven villages of the Molotschna, with some 300 families, more than five million trees



had been planted. Among the fruits grown at this time were grapes and mulberries, the latter for their leaves, which were fed to the silk worms. For a while silk production was one of the main sources of income. During the seventies when some of the Mennonites came to America this industry was still strong enough that they transplanted it and the mulberry trees to the plains of Kansas. The quality and varieties of vegetables were greatly improved through the efforts of Cornies. Flower gardens, which are even today typical for a Mennonite community in Manitoba and Kansas, were encouraged. Of great importance to the Russian and nomadic population was the introduction of potatoes supervised by Cornies.

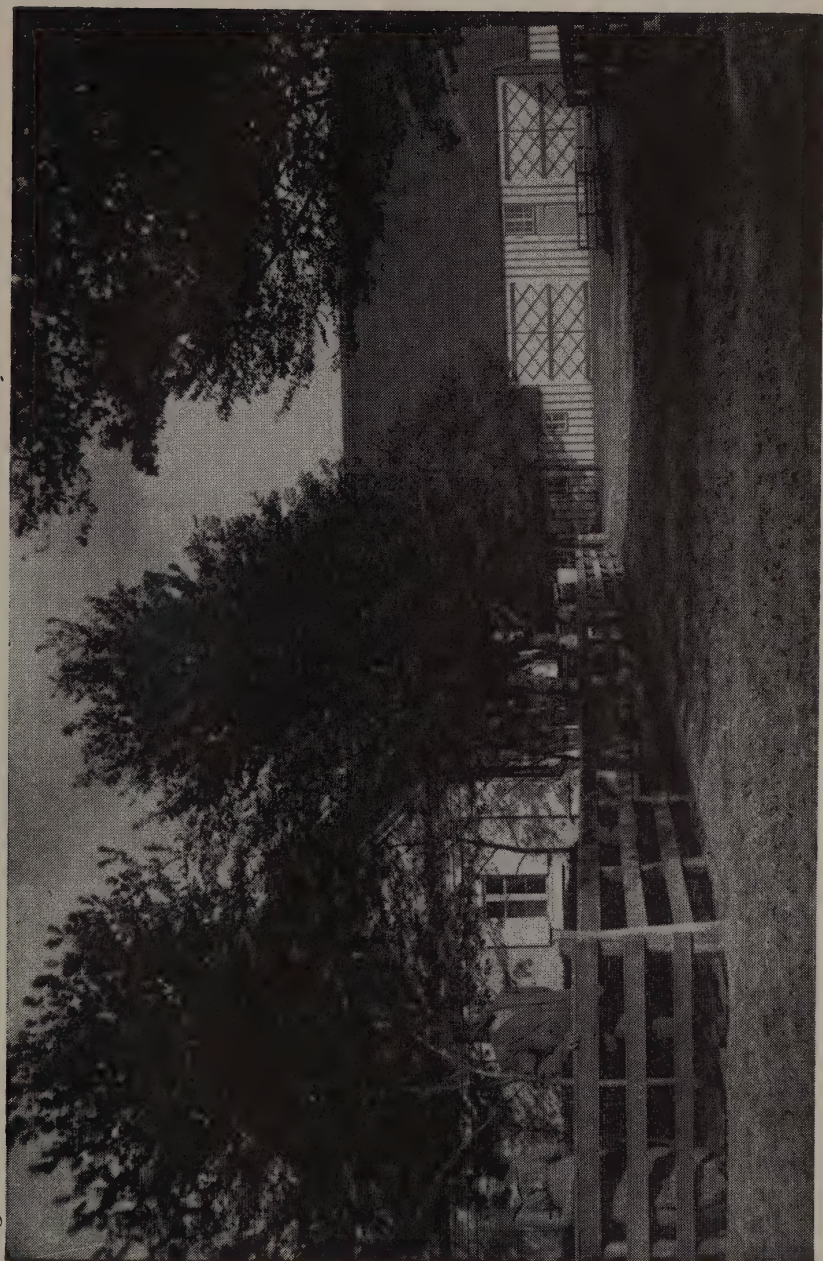
The building of houses and the planning of villages was also under the supervision of the Agricultural Association. Matters of mutual aid, hospitalization, orphanages, homes for the aged, education, disciplining and policing the life of the community, and other functions were the responsibilities of this organization. The man at the head of it met much stubborn resistance. Vision, patience, and the ability to deal with people gave him success. The Agricultural Association functioned as a medium between the government and the Mennonite colonies. It derived its authority and power to give and enforce orders from the government and was responsible to it.

Without any formal higher education, Cornies exerted a great influence among his co-religionists, the other colonists, the surrounding Russians, especially the Dukhobors and Molokans, as well as the many originally nomadic tribes as the Kalmyks, Tatars, etc. To all of them he was a fatherly friend and adviser, trusted and honored. This was touchingly expressed when representatives of all these groups came to his funeral in 1848. He had been the host to czars and high authorities and the friend and sacrificing adviser of the nomads. He had become a member of the Academy of Science and had declined to serve as governor of his province. He had remained a man of the soil and the Bible like his forefathers.

Cornies was the Moses of his people. He led them all the way to success and yet at the end of his life he requested the erection of a broken pillar on his grave. He considered his work incomplete. Others had to continue. His sacrifice and labor bore much fruit.

#### *Agriculture in the Steppes*

Sheep raising among the Mennonites rose to a peak during the forties and after a few decades disappeared entirely. By crossing the Frisian and Dutch breeds the cattle breeders succeeded, during the fifties, in producing a high quality, well adapted breed known as the *Molotschna Dairy Cow*. Even after the Revolution, the *Krasnaja Nemka*, produced by the Mennonites was famous. The once prosperous silk industry disappeared entirely after the first hundred years, as did the raising of tobacco and flax. The crop that caused so sudden and complete a revolution was wheat. Around 1850 approximately one-third of the land was plowed and only one-third of the crops raised on this was wheat, mainly summer wheat. The introduction of summer fallow helped to bring about a change. It assured a better crop. Also implements were improved. The growth of larger cities in the neighborhood, Russia's penetration into the Crimea, and the opening of ports along the Black Sea made wheat a desired commodity for



Mennonite homestead in South Russia showing architectural style dating back to Prussia and Holland



shipment into the interior as well as for export. Thus wheat production increased. Gradually winter wheat became more and more prominent. The Mennonites took the lead in selecting varieties best suited to their climatic conditions and in producing the finest types of flour. This development came to a climax before the first World War, but even after the Revolution the Mennonites continued with this tradition (see S. P. Sorokin, *Semenovodstvo v semykh tovarishestvakh Vserossijskogo Mennonitskogo Selsko-Chozjajstvennogo Obscestva*, Moscow, 1926.)

The demand for wheat and specialization in the production of it revolutionized the agricultural and economic life of the Mennonites. The manufacturing of farm and milling machinery developed within the communities as well as the milling of grain itself. It also resulted in big-scale farming. Through the general prosperity resulting from this and a well developed mutual aid system, Mennonite colonies spread all over southern and eastern Russia and into Siberia. Before the outbreak of World War I, 80,000 Mennonites of Russia owned more than three million acres of land. The total property amounted to two hundred seventy-six million ruble or an average of thirty thousand ruble per family.

From the very beginning the Mennonites had produced whatever machinery and furnishings they needed in little work shops. The birth of modern Mennonite industry, in line with big-scale wheat raising, took place when Peter Lepp of Chortitza built the first threshing machine in 1853. In 1860 he opened his own foundry. Before the first World War the eight largest manufacturing plants had a combined return of more than three million ruble. Ten per cent of the total amount of agricultural machinery of the Ukraine came from the Mennonite manufacturers. Needless to say the flail and the threshing floor were now antiques among the Mennonites. The milling industry grew rapidly, the largest company, Niebuhr & Company, Alexandrovsk, having an annual return of three million ruble. Flourishing commerce and trade resulted from this development. Big estate farming was another outgrowth of the wheat revolution. One-third of all of the land owned by the Mennonites belonged to the three hundred eighty-four families, the largest estate consisting of fifty-four thousand acres. But three-fourths of the Mennonites farmed about two hundred acres each and lived in the traditional villages of thirty to fifty homesteads. They are the pioneers that made the Ukraine the "granary of Russia."

### *Looking for New Frontiers*

During the seventies a radical change of the Russian Government toward the "foreign colonists" took place. The frontiers of the Ukraine were now settled and established, and the nationalists in the government were dissatisfied with the slow process of the Russianization of the foreign settlers. Assimilation was to be speeded up by restricting the semi-independent status the colonies had enjoyed, especially in matters of school and public administration. All foreign settlers had been free from military service. Therefore, the most radical change was the passing of a general conscription law. Especially the Mennonites were alarmed, because they objected to participation in warfare on religious grounds. Since their origin during the sixteenth century it had always been one of their principal characteristics

to serve suffering fellow men in the name of Christ, especially during times of catastrophe and war but not to participate in military service. This they had done in The Netherlands, in Prussia, and recently in the Crimean War. And were not the draining of the swamps of the Vistula Delta and the exhaustive work in transforming the steppes of the Ukraine into the granary of Europe of significance? Now the young men were called to give up the plow and take the sword. Their interpretation of the Bible made no allowance for this. The government was willing to compromise and offered them non-combatant service. Some considered this a satisfactory solution. Others were not willing to be conscripted to any kind of service. Christian service should be voluntary. These began to search for new homes on new frontiers. Many turned their eyes toward America.

The first man to leave Russia to investigate conditions in America was Bernhard Warkentin. Although he was not an official delegate he reported his findings to his friend, David Goerz, in beautifully written, lengthy letters, which were duplicated and circulated in the villages to be read at mass meetings. The reports were received enthusiastically and paved the way for a large migration.

The Mennonite Church of Berdiansk was headed by Leonhard Sudermann, an experienced and well educated man, who was one of the outstanding delegates to investigate the frontiers of America. Another man greatly responsible for the planning of the mass migration was Cornelius Jansen, a member of that church who had been a German consul. The importance of his influence is evidenced by the fact that he was exiled from Russia in 1873 before the migration got under way. He settled in Nebraska, where his son, Peter Jansen, later became senator.

Meanwhile the United States and Canadian railroad and government agencies had heard about the possible exodus of successful Mennonite farmers from Russia. A sharp rivalry started. First W. Hespeler was sent to the Ukraine by the Canadian Government and later C. B. Schmidt by the Santa Fe Railroad to induce the immigrants to settle in Manitoba and Kansas, respectively. Warkentin, and the above mentioned Mennonite delegates were greatly aided in choosing new homes by these and other agencies, as well as by the Mennonites who had settled in Pennsylvania and other states since the founding of Germantown in 1683. Warkentin had his headquarters among the Mennonites in Summerfield, Illinois, whence a number of them joined him in settling in Halstead, Kansas. Most prominent among this group was Christian Krehbiel, who helped Warkentin and his countrymen to establish themselves in this country.

After his return Hespeler informed his government that the Mennonites were looking for enough land to settle in compact, semi-independent communities consisting of a number of villages with their own schools. They were coming to use the plowshare, but not the sword. The Canadian government was willing to grant these requests. Most of the delegates, however, as well as Warkentin preferred the climatic conditions of the United States, to that of Manitoba. Representatives who had an audience with President Grant found him a very kind and approachable man in contrast to their experiences in Russia, but also a person who was not able to make commitments concerning the above mentioned requests like



czars and even His Majesty's government. Through the efforts of the states and railroads concerned, and the American Mennonites, the matter was taken up in the Senate. The senator of Minnesota said that Canada was granting the Mennonites the rights for which they were asking, but that they preferred the United States. Since they were "the very best farmers of Russia," he was in favor of passing the bill. The senator of Vermont and Connecticut found it undemocratic to grant such rights. The senator from Wisconsin was opposed to the bill, while senators from Indiana and Nebraska favored it. The latter said: "If there is any portion of the world that can send us a few advocates of peace, in God's name, let us bid them welcome."

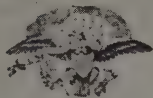
The bill was shelved and never brought up again. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, however, gave delegates a certified statement referring to the laws exempting conscientious objectors and granting them non-combatant service as "duty in the hospitals," which was attached to a copy of the *Public Laws of the United States of America of the Thirty-eighth Congress* (1863-1864), while President Grant assured them "that for the next fifty years we will not be entangled in another war in which military service will be necessary."

#### *From the Steppes to the Prairies*

Thus the Mennonites of Russia had to choose between noncombatant service in the United States and Russia and complete exemption in Canada. The only difference between the United States and Russia was that the latter had peacetime conscription, while the former was to have no conscription except during a war. On this basis the Mennonites of Russia could at that time be classified into three main groups. The more progressive culturally, approximately two-thirds of the total number remained in Russia. The most conservative Mennonites who had lived in the *Old Colony* and its daughter-colonies migrated to Canada because they were promised complete exemption from all compulsory military service by the Canadian Government. After World War I, however, a large number of them moved to Mexico and Paraguay because they felt that the government had not respected the integrity of a promise. The third, a moderately conservative group, came from the *Molotschna Colony* and settled in the United States. They were joined by the Hutterites, most of whom went to Canada after World War I. Mennonites from Volhynia, of Swiss background, and from Poland, of Prussian background, chose to settle in Kansas and South Dakota. A small group direct from Prussia settled in Kansas and Nebraska. Altogether about 18,000 Mennonites came to North America during the decade following 1873. Of these, 10,000 came to the United States, settling mostly in Kansas, and the other 8,000 went to Manitoba.

It has been pointed out that the Mennonites were seeking for a new home in which they could continue their way of life with as little interruption as possible. The new buildings and villages were patterned after those they had left behind. Against the advice of Warkentin the settlers brought with them all kinds of furniture, tools and implements, even wagons and plows. The clock, which had probably been in the family for generations, was hung on the wall corresponding to the place where it had hung in the old country. The beautiful chest styled after the traditional pattern and filled

## DEPARTMENT



OF STATE.

I Certify, That in each of my old & new editions of  
Brown's Atlas it is intimated that there had been some error  
committed therein for many years past, and that  
the numerous errors were corrected in the new edition  
of 1846. That the plates used in the old editions  
be found as perfect as possible, and that the new  
edition of 1846 be found as perfect as possible.  
I also certify that the new edition of 1846 is  
perfect, and that the new edition of 1846 is  
perfect, and that the new edition of 1846 is

In testimony whereof, M.

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with the most cherished possessions was put into its familiar setting. If they had forgotten something they wrote to relatives to bring it along, for example, gooseberry seed, tulip bulbs, etc. Almost immediately the prairie was transformed by villages whose homes were surrounded by rows of shade and mulberry trees, and neat flower gardens, and by fields of waving grain. The mulberry hedges served several purposes, the most important of which was providing food for the silk worms. There are still some pioneers who remember feeding the silkworms and working in the silk factory at Peabody, Kansas. Also some Merino sheep ranches, which had been so famous in Russia, were attempted in this country. Before long many of the old customs, the villages, the outmoded implements, the style of buildings, the sheep ranches, the silk industry, and other marked characteristics gradually disappeared. Among the survivors of the old culture are the tulip gardens, a few mulberry trees, and some "Russian" watermelons. The conservative Mennonites of Manitoba, Mexico, and Paraguay, however, have retained many more such customs.

One seed transplanted from the steppes to the prairies grew and multiplied far beyond any expectation. This little kernel of wheat that fell into the ground has conquered the prairie and made it the bread basket of the nation. The seed crossed the ocean in the handmade chests along with many other types of seed without anyone being aware that it was *the* one to play so significant a role in the life of millions. It was the hard winter wheat grown natively along the coasts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Here it was raised by Cossacks, Ukrainians, Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Germans. It was used at home and exported to regions around the Mediterranean for macaroni. Around 1850 the London market began to appreciate the peculiar qualities of this wheat because of the strength of the flour it produced. The growing demand, the improvement of machinery, and the opening of ports along the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov made the Ukraine the granary of Europe. According to H. D. Seymour, the ports of Berdiansk and Mariopol, near the *Molotschna Colony*, shipped the best quality of wheat. Cornelius Jansen stated that the Mennonites of the *Molotschna Colony* produced, during the year 1855, about a half million bushels of wheat. Thus it is not surprising that in 1873 the senator from Minnesota spoke to Congress of competition which America met on the London wheat market from Russian shipments and urged that the Mennonites should be given opportunity to settle in the Middle West in order to increase wheat production in this country.

From his early youth Bernhard Warkentin showed great interest in wheat production and the milling industry. In his letters he frequently refers to such matters. In 1872 on his search for a home for his countrymen he stopped in Minneapolis to visit the State Agricultural Exposition. The enormous yields of wheat which he mentions certainly must have been an inducement for his people to exchange the steppes for the prairies. He even mentions having seen there the Arnautka wheat, a Russian variety, which was introduced to Kansas from Russia by M. A. Carleton two decades later. During that winter Warkentin studied the milling industry at Summerfield, Illinois, and in the spring, before the first immigrants arrived, he was building a watermill at Halstead, Kansas.

### *Sowing the Seed*

In 1874 the Mennonites from Russia sowed their first wheat in this country. It was nothing extraordinary. Many people had sowed wheat in Kansas before. At this time T. C. Henry, of Salina, had thousands of acres of wheat. After he had tried many varieties of soft wheat he said: "Finally my attention was directed to the Turkey or Red Russian variety. It was a hard wheat and at first regarded as much inferior to the Red May, but it proved very hardy and yielded prolifically. I substituted it, I think, in 1877 . . . I know nothing as to its origin. The wheat farmers of Kansas should offer a prize for that information." Thus wrote "the Kansas wheat king" some years after the arrival of the Mennonites. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that an editor at Marion, who lived among the Mennonites who raised the red Turkey wheat, urged in vain that his readers report their findings with this variety. A contemporary of that time said: "Day after day, through all the fall and winter, the Mennonites came in with wheat. The native American stands on the corner and complains, but the Mennonites come in with wheat. The Farmers' Alliance holds its secret and noiseless session and nothing breaks the silence save the chuck of the Mennonites' wheat laden wagons . . ." After experimenting with different varieties they realized that the hard Turkey winter wheat was best suited to the soil and climatic conditions of Kansas. Gradually this wheat spread into the neighboring non-Mennonite counties.

The quantity of red Turkey seed-wheat brought along by the Mennonites must, according to all available evidence, having been small. It was, first of all, Warkentin who realized the great superiority of this variety of wheat in comparison to the soft varieties. He verified this by experiments on his farm, in his mill, and by the experiences of other farmers. To increase production of hard winter wheat he imported a large shipment of it from the Crimea in 1885-86 for distribution among the farmers. At this time he established one of the leading milling companies of the Middle West—The Newton Milling and Elevator Company.

It was one thing to find the right wheat for Kansas and another to find the millers to grind it into flour, and the bakers to bake the flour into bread, and the people to eat the bread made from the hard winter wheat. To produce good flour of this wheat the millers had to replace the stone burrs with rollers and the resulting product was darker in color and more glutenous. Bakers found that a barrel of it would make more loaves of bread than a barrel of flour milled from soft wheat. Housewives were reluctant to buy it because it was slightly different. Only the Mennonite housewives found no complaint with the flour because they were able to bake their *Zwieback* every Saturday just as tasty as they had baked this bread in the old country. To find a market for flour made from hard wheat the millers resorted to mixing hard and soft wheat. Gradually the demand for this flour increased not only in this country but also abroad. A Belgian firm wrote to the Newton Milling and Elevator Company in 1888: "Kansas flour of Turkey wheat is always welcome to this country. In fact, it is the only flour that answers well the purpose."

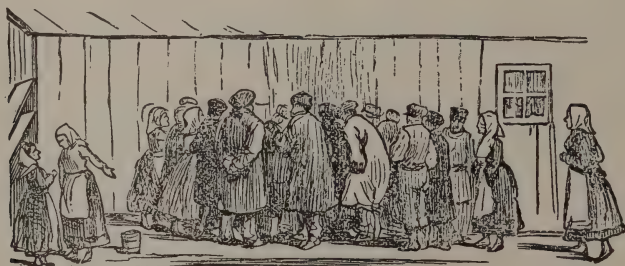
After the above mentioned shipment of seed wheat from the Ukraine,



Warkentin continued to experiment with seed wheat on his farm near Halstead by importing it in bushel lots. In 1900 the Kansas State Millers' Association and the Kansas Grain Dealers' Association called upon him to present his findings, after which a committee asked Warkentin to arrange for a large scale importation of seed wheat. About 15,000 bushels were imported and distributed to farmers the next year. Thus the prairies of the Middle West gradually became the granary of the nation and one of the major bread baskets of the world.

Not only the adjustment to soil and climatic conditions on the part of farmers and millers brought this about, but also the efforts of a "wheat dreamer" and scientist. In 1896 Mark A. Carleton, who was experimenting with wheat and oats near Salina for the United States Department of Agriculture, came to see Bernhard Warkentin to inquire about the latter's experiments with wheat. Consequently he became very much interested in hard Turkey wheat. In the ensuing correspondence carried on by these two men, Warkentin gave Carleton additional information about the Russian home of the Mennonites of Kansas and the wheat which they had brought with them. This resulted in Carleton's going to the Ukraine in 1898 to study the red Turkey wheat in its native country. After his return the following year Carleton asked Warkentin to locate a ten-acre plot of land upon which he could experiment with "somewhere near three hundred varieties of wheat" which he had brought from Russia. The plot of land upon which Carleton worked from 1899 to 1901 was located near Halstead, Kansas. Altogether about thirty hybrid varieties have been developed from this hard wheat, the best known being Kanred, Blackhull, and Tenmarq.

The share of the Mennonites in transforming the prairies into wheat fields is due mainly to the following factors. The prairies were similar to the steppes from which they had come. Therefore the hard winter wheat seed they had brought with them was well adapted to the soil and climatic conditions of their new home. They were born farmers with "plow and Bible" as the symbol of their religious, social, and economic life. Settling in compact and homogeneous communities made the very rapid spread of the hard winter wheat possible. Thus by tilling the soil in quietness and following the way of life set by them for generations they made their contribution without being aware of its vast consequences. Symbolically the broken pillar of Cornies in the steppes was completed on the prairies.



# The Mennonites In Kansas\*

By Noble L. Prentis

One of the largest bona fide land sales ever made in Kansas, perhaps in America, has just been concluded by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company with a community of Russian Mennonites who landed in New York during the month of September with the steamers *Cimbria*, *Teutonia* and *City of Richmond*, and most of whom have spent the last thirty days and a good many of their rubles in our city. Their land purchase amounts in round numbers to about 100,000 acres of railroad land, aside from a number of improved farms, all lying north of the stations of Florence, Peabody, Walton, Newton, Halstead, Burrton and Hutchinson. Thanks to the untiring energy and the extraordinary liberality of the A. T. & S. F. Railroad Company, this means to Kansas, and particularly to Marion, Harvey, McPherson and Reno counties, an acquisition of about one million and a half of capital and a wholesale addition to her producing population of some two thousand souls. From the Cottonwood River to the Little Arkansas, a scope of magnificent prairie country fifty miles in length, is now one colony, composed of the thriftiest and most intelligent class of foreigners that ever landed upon our shores; and "in three years," to use the language of one of their elders, "that ocean of grass will be transformed into an ocean of waving fields of grain, just as we left our Molotschna colony." Kansas will be to America what the country of the Black Sea of Azov is now to Europe, her wheat-field.

The Mennonite immigration into Kansas began shortly after the return to Russia of the first delegations that had been sent to the United States and Canada on an exploring tour, about a year ago. A few single families of considerable wealth followed the advice of their delegates, who had examined the entire west, and selected several sections of land in the vicinity of Marion Centre, where they made substantial improvements at once. This initial step was followed about the close of last year by the purchase from the A. T. & S. F. Railroad Company of 43,000 acres of land in Harvey and McPherson counties on the part of members of the Mennonite community at Summerfield, St. Clair county, Ill., who also took a controlling interest in the town of Halstead, which will no doubt become the trade center of the Mennonite colonies in Kansas. Parties of from five to forty families have since arrived from Russia, mostly from the Crimean peninsula, some coming first to Kansas, but most of them not until they had examined other states. All the Mennonite communities in this country are becoming interested in the settlement of their people in Kansas, and the movement is rapidly gaining in magnitude. Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Canada have

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\*From *The Commonwealth*, Topeka, Kansas, October 15, 1874.



already furnished large numbers of land purchasers and settlers. The party which has arrived in Topeka in the last thirty days, and who have now left for their future homes, numbers about two hundred and fifty families, the majority of whom have belonged to the celebrated Molotschna colony, in the governmental district of Taurida, of which the Crimea is a part. That colony comprises sixty-five villages, and is considered the wealthiest of the German settlements of South Russia. Emigration from that place has but just set in, and as fast as the people can obtain their passports from the government so fast will they leave that country for America.

The writer has, during his intercourse with these people, learned much of their peculiar traits, their political and religious position in Russia, and the causes that brought about the present exodus, which threatens to carry with it the German colonists in Russia of all other denominations as well as the Mennonites in Prussia and Poland. . . . One of the most powerful inducements to bring the Mennonites to Kansas has been the passage of an act during last winter's session of the Legislature, amending the militia law of 1868 so that all persons who, on or before the 1st day of May, in each year, file with the clerk of their county an affidavit that they are members of a religious organization whose articles of faith prohibit the bearing of arms, shall be exempt from militia duty. A translation of this amendment has been published by the A. T. & S. F. R. R. Co., with a pamphlet descriptive of Kansas lands, which has been sent to Russia by that company, and was well circulated in the colonies. The fact that a good portion of the most influential of the different colonies have now settled in Kansas and are well satisfied here, will go far to induce the bulk of these people to re-establish their former relations, and most of the latecomers have left near relatives behind.

Next summer will show wonderful changes in the region between the Cottonwood and Little Arkansas rivers, till now almost devoid of habitations. Even now the busy hum has begun. Long lines of wagons with lumber, household goods and farm implements, are passing out from the railroad stations. The carpenters are busy putting up the first temporary shelter. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company is erecting five immense emigrant houses at convenient places for the reception of newcomers. The mowers that had been laid by for the season are brought into requisition again to cut the waving grass for the numerous thousands of work horses, oxen and milk cows to subsist on during the short winter season; car load after car load of breaking plows and other implements are sent down the road, and it seems as if the working season for the farmer had but just begun. The wild prairie is to be broken doubly deep in October, yet to receive a dressing of wheat and rye. No one thinks of drouth and grasshoppers—everybody is hopeful and energetic, and hope and energy will find their reward.

## The Mennonites At Home\*

Talking the other day with Mr. C. B. Schmidt, the foreign missionary of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, we asked him concerning the present whereabouts and prospects of the last detachment of Mennonite immigrants from Russia, whose arrival was recently chronicled in the *Commonwealth*, whereupon Mr. S. suggested that the questioner visit the Mennonites and enable himself to answer his own question. The suggestion was unanimously adopted....

The original objective point of the trip was Halstead, where Mr. B. Warkentin, a Mennonite, has a fine flouring mill; but circumstances changed cases, so that our railroad journey ended at Newton. Mr. Warkentin, by-the-way, was met on the train going down, with his bride, a young lady from Summerfield, St. Clair county, Illinois. The bridegroom, bride, two brothers-in-law and a sister of the bride, made up a gay party.

In the morning bright and early the "outfit" started from Newton. Like Mr. G. A. Sala's trip to Russia, ours was "A Journey Due North," over the prairie and over a road now used almost exclusively by the Mennonite settlers; in fact the first team we met was that of a Mennonite who was going to Newton with a wagon-load of watermelons. He very politely handed over a melon, selecting one which he said was of Russian origin. It was a very fine one, and we anticipated great pleasure on our next visit to St. Petersburg in sitting on a store-box in front of the Imperial palace and eating such a melon with the Grand Duke Alexis. And this brings up the great subject of watermelons, as connected with the Mennonite immigration.

The Mennonites have a decided preference for watermelons over every other "fruit." They call the melon "arboosen," though we would not be willing to certify that this is the correct spelling. The last detachment happened to arrive at Atchison on Saturday—market-day, and among the first objects they saw were the big Kansas watermelons. They "went for them then and thar," and felt that they had reached the "happy land of Canaan." Unless some other state can raise larger watermelons than Kansas—which some other state can't—the future Mennonite immigration will be directed hitherward. This fondness for watermelons and a watermelon country are an indication of the peaceable and sensible character of the Mennonite people. The American prefers to migrate to a country where he has a chance to be eaten up by grizzlies and chased by wolves, and can exercise his bowie-knife on the active red man, while the Mennonite sees no fun in danger, abhors war, and so seeks out a fertile, peaceable country, where he buries his glittering steel, not in the hearts of his enemies, but in the bowels of the luscious watermelon.

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\*From Noble L. Prentis, *Kansas Miscellanies* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1889), pp. 147-154.



The first Mennonite residence reached was that of "Bishop" Buller, who is not a bishop at all, as the Mennonites recognize but one order in their ministry, that of "elder," who is elected by the congregation, and is usually a farmer like the rest. At Mr. Buller's we saw an evidence of progress. One of the stone rollers which were procured to thresh grain was lying in the yard, while a short distance away was an American threshing-machine in full blast.

Mr. Buller accompanied us to the residence of Abraham Reimer, where a council was being held relating to some business with the railroad company.

The establishment of Mr. Reimer, who is a leading man among his people and who left fine property in Russia, afforded a good idea of what Mennonite thrift has already accomplished in Kansas. Mr. Reimer's house was a substantial frame structure with two large barns, and at the rear of it numerous stacks of grain arranged in a semi-circle. A stout boy and girl were engaged near by in stacking hay, the young lady officiating on top of the stack. That the Mennonite, the female Mennonite, is not destitute of an eye for the beautiful, was shown by a well-kept flower garden at the end of the house. It is true that the flowers were arranged in straight rows and were such floral old-timers as pinks, marigolds and the like, but, after all, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these.

Out in the dooryard there was that queer blending of races often seen in Kansas. There were Mennonites, and in the midst was a horse-trader of the usual American type, and with him a young colored man who spoke German and acted as interpreter. An object of interest to all except the Mennonites, was a Russian farm-wagon, noticeable for its short coupling, narrow "track," flaring bed painted green, and a profusion of blacksmith's work all over. The horse-trader intimated that the American eagle would not condescend to ride in such a wagon.

The interior of the house, as we have said, consisted of two rooms, as yet unplastered, looking like the apartments of any thrifty settler who has not yet had time to plaster his walls. The only "foreign contrivance" to attract a stranger's notice was the bedstead and bedding, the latter piled up in a high stack when not in use, and covered over with a calico "spread." The top of the high, narrow pile resembled in shape a coffin, and conveyed the unpleasant impression to the visitor that he had arrived just in time for a funeral. In the "best room" the meeting was in progress. The room was quite full, and the visages of all present were as immovable as the green-and-gold face of a Russian clock that ticked on the wall. These clocks are seen everywhere. They sport a long pendulum with a disk as big as a buckwheat cake, and long, heavy hanging weights of brass. There was not a newspaper or periodical in sight, and no books save a black-covered German Bible, according to the version of Dr. Martin Luther, and several Mennonite hymn-books; these last were bound in leather and printed in Odessa. There were few relics of Russia to be seen, especially no pictures of any sort. In every kitchen, however, there is a Russian teakettle—a large affair of copper, lined with tin; and at "Bishop"

Buller's we saw some wooden bowls, curiously painted and gilded. They are very common in Russia, and the smaller sizes sell for three cents each. The Mennonite in Russia beats the Yankee in the woodenware line.

After the council had broken up, dinner followed, being neat and clean. The leading features were fried cakes, the English name of which appeared to be "roll-cake"; then there was black rye bread—very good—and excellent butter. We should not omit to add that there was also water-melon. Everything indicated that the Mennonite is "fixed"; he is a good liver, and hospitable in any event.

We finally took leave of Abraham Reimer, who shook hands cordially, though he did not kiss Mr. Schmidt as he did the Mennonite brethren when they left. The luxury of men kissing each other appears to be exclusively confined to the Mennonite Church.

We left the Reimer settlement for Gnadenu by way of Hoffnungsthal. The Reimer settlement is called New Alexanderwohl, or New Alexander's health. . . . A few miles further east along the south branch of the Cottonwood is a row of grass-thatched shanties called Hoffnungsthal. The settlers here are poor, and the name of the town signifies "The Valley of Hope." The settlers live in hope. Next in order comes the admirably-located town of Gnadenu. Mr. Schmidt seemed "mixed" as to the meaning of this word, and we are not positive whether it signifies "Valley of Grace," or "The place from which a fine prospect can be seen."

We drove across an immensity of newly-broken prairie before we arrived at the acres of sod corn and watermelons which mark the corporation line of Gnadenu. The houses of Gnadenu present every variety of architecture, but each house is determined on one thing, to keep on the north side of the one street of the town and face to the south. Some of houses are shaped like a "wedge" tent, the inclining sides consisting of a frame of wood, thatched with long prairie grass, the ends being sometimes of sod, at others of boards, and others of sun-dried brick. Other houses resemble a wall tent, the sides being of sod laid up as regularly as a mason lays brick, and the roof of grass. Some of these sod houses were in course of construction. Finally came substantial frame houses. At the east end of the street, in a red frame house with board window shutters painted green, lives Jacob Wiebe, the head man of Gnadenu. We found Mr. Wiebe a tall, powerfully-built man, with a more martial appearance than his brethren. This may arise from the circumstance that the Mennonite church is divided on the question of shaving, and Mr. Wiebe adheres to the bearded persuasion. Mr. Wiebe came to Kansas from the Crimea, where a Mennonite colony was established some thirteen years ago, and it sounded strange to hear him use in conversation the once famous names of localities near his home, Sevastopol, Kertch, Eupatoria and others. But Kansas is drawing a population from regions yet farther away than these. On our road to Peabody we met a Mennonite settler who announced the arrival of a daughter from the border of Circassia. Mr. Wiebe has built a house more nearly on the Russian model. He took us over the structure, a maze of small rooms and passages, the stable being under the same roof with the people, and the granaries over all, the great wheat-stacks being located at the back door.

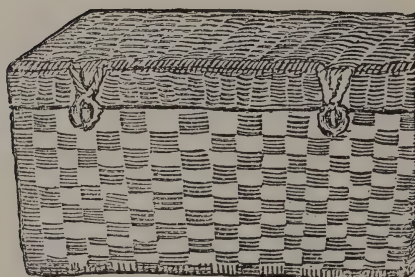


An immense pile of straw was intended, Mr. Wiebe said, for fuel this winter. The Mennonites are economists in the way of fuel, and at the houses are large piles of chopped straw mixed with barnyard manure stacked up for "firewood." This kind of fuel destroys one's ideas of the "cheerful fireside" and "blazing hearth." There is not much "yule-log" poetry about it. Straw sounds and smells better. In order to use it, however, the Mennonites discard stoves, and use a Russian oven built in the wall of the house, which, once thoroughly heated with light straw, will retain its warmth longer than young love itself.

Of course we visited the watermelon fields, which in the aggregate seemed about a quarter-section, and Mr. Wiebe insisted on donating a hundred pound or so of the fruit—or is it vegetable?—fearing we might get hungry on the road.

As we have mentioned three Mennonite villages, we may say that the Mennonite system contemplates that the landholder shall live in the town and in the country at the same time. The villagers of Gnadenau and Hoffnungsthal own fourteen sections of land, yet all the farmers live in the two towns, each of a single street. Near are the gardens, and all around are the wide fields. Near each house were immense stacks of grain raised on ground rented from men who were driven out last year by the grass-hoppers.

When we left the manly and hospitable Wiebe's, the evening was well advanced. At the top of the ridge we looked back into the wide sunlit valley with the cornfields and the long row of grass-thatched houses, and thought of the coming day when solid farm-houses and great barns and waving orchards would line the long village street, even to Hoffnungsthal; and so we slashed open a watermelon, and drank to the health of Gnadenau.



## A Day With The Mennonites\*

There has always been something very interesting to me in the coming of different peoples to Kansas, and the blending of all of them into a community of interest and language. In my newspaper travels I have interviewed a half-dozen varieties of "colonists," among them the Hungarians, of Rawlins county, and the colored folks of Nicodemus, who came to Kansas from the distant and foreign shores of Kentucky.

By far the most extensive and notable immigration in the history of Kansas was that of the so-called "Russians," which began substantially in 1874, and which has resulted in the settlement of fifteen thousand Mennonites in the counties of Marion, Harvey, McPherson, Butler, Reno and Barton, besides the Catholic German-Russians, who have some settlements in Ellis county, on the line of the Kansas Pacific, and whose mud village of Herzog I visited in 1878.

The rallying-point of the Russian immigrants in 1874 and 1875 was Topeka, and that town abounded with sheepskin coats, ample breeches, bulbous petticoats, iron teakettles, and other objects supposed to be distinctively Russian, for many months. There was considerable competition between the two great land-grant roads—the Kansas Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe—to secure these people as settlers. With its usual good luck, the Santa Fe captured both the larger and the better class, the Mennonites . . . .

In the summer of 1875, in company with Mr. C. B. Schmidt, then, as now, the Emigration Agent of the A. T. & S. F., who had been largely instrumental in settling them in Kansas, I visited a portion of the colonists, living in the villages of New Alexanderwohl, Hoffnungsthal and Gnadenau, in Harvey and Marion counties. The observations made on the occasion of that visit were embodied in an article in the *Topeka Commonwealth*, entitled "The Mennonites at Home." From that visit until yesterday, I had never seen the Mennonites, though I had often felt a great curiosity to observe for myself how they had succeeded.

In 1875 the Mennonites were still a strange people. They retained the little green flaring wagons they had brought from Russia, and were attempting to live here under the same rule they followed in Russia. The village of Gnadenau was the most pretentious of their villages. It was a long row of houses, mostly built of sod and thatched with long prairie grass. A few of the wealthier citizens had built frame houses, furnished with the brick ovens of Russian origin which warm the family and cook its food for all day with two armfuls of loose straw.

The land, belonging in severalty to the villagers, lay around the

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\*From Noble L. Prentis, *Kansas Miscellanies* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1889), pp. 155-167.



settlement, some of it at a considerable distance, while near at hand was a large common field, or rather garden, which was principally devoted to watermelons, which seemed the principal article on the Mennonite bill of fare.

The site of the villages seemed selected with care, each standing on such slight ridges and elevations as the prairie afforded. It was summer in Kansas, and of course the scene was naturally beautiful; but the scattered or collected Mennonite houses, with their bare walls of sods or boards, amid patches of broken prairie, did not at all add to the charm of the scene. The people were like their houses, useful but ugly. They had not yet got over the effect of their long ocean voyage or their life in the huddled emigrant quarters at Topeka, where they acquired a reputation for uncleanness which they were far from deserving. Still there was an appearance of resolution and patience about them, taken with the fact that all, men, women and children, were at work, that argued well for the future. It was easy, if possessed of the slightest amount of imagination, to see these rude habitations transformed in time to the substantial brick houses surrounded by orchards, such as the people had owned when they lived on the banks of the Molotschna in far Russia. Of course, it was reasoned, they would remain villagers; they would cling to the customs they brought from Russia, and remain for generations a peculiar people. They would be industrious; they would acquire wealth; but they would remain destitute of any sense of beauty, rather sordid, unsocial, and to that extent undesirable settlers.

Hardly seven years have passed, and on Friday last, for the first time, the writer was enabled to carry into effect a long-cherished purpose to return and take another look at the Mennonites. It was intended to start from Newton in the morning, but a day fair as ever dawned in Eden was followed by a night of thunder, lightning, and rain, the rain continuing to fall all the following forenoon, with a chill wind from the north; but at noon one of those "transformation scenes" common in Kansas occurred. The sky began to clear, with a great band of blue in the north and west; the wind blew free, and by 2 o'clock we drove out over roads that you could almost walk in barefooted without soiling your feet. We were fortunate in our guide, Mr. Muntefering, of Newton, who had hunted all over the country, and had traversed it often transacting business on behalf of the railroad company with the Mennonites. The wheat waved a varying shade of green, shifting in its lines like sea-water; the prairie-chickens rose on whirring wing before the old hunting-dog who ran before the carriage; flocks of long-billed plover looked out of the grass; and the meadow-lark rehearsed a few notes on his never-finished song.

A great change had taken place in the country generally since my last visit. The then raw prairie was now, barring the fences, very much like Illinois. At last, after driving about ten miles, Mr. Muntefering announced the first Mennonite habitation, in what seemed the edge of a young forest, and I then learned what I had never before heard, or else had forgotten, that the Mennonites had abandoned the village system, and now lived "each man to himself." They tried the villages three

years, but some confusion arose in regard to paying taxes, and besides, it is in the air, this desire for absolute personal and family independence; and so they went on their lands, keeping, however, as close together as the lay of the country would admit. Sometimes there are four houses to the quarter-section; sometimes four to the section. The grand divisions of New Alexanderwohl, Hoffnungsthal and Gnadenau still exist, but each group of farms has a name of its own, revealing a poetical tendency somewhere, as Green field, Flower Field, Field of Grace, Emma Vale Vale of Hope, and so on. These are the German names freely translated. The old sod-houses (we believe the Mennonites never resorted to the dug-out) had given way to frame houses, sometimes painted white, with wooden window-shutters. The houses had no porches or other architectural adornments, and were uniform in appearance. I learned afterward, that the houses were built by contract, one builder at Halstead erecting sixty-five houses in one neighborhood.

The most surprising thing about these places is the growth of the trees. I left bare prairie; I returned to find a score of miniature forests in sight from any point of view. The wheat and corn fields were unfenced, of course, but several acres around every house were set in hedges, orchards, lanes and alleys of trees—trees in lines, trees in groups, and trees all alone. In many cases the houses were hardly visible from the road, and in a few years will be entirely hidden in the cool shade. Where the houses were only a few hundred yards apart, as was frequently the case, a path ran from one to the other, between two lines of poplars or cottonwoods. A very common shrub was imported from Russia and called the wild olive, the flowers being fragrant; but the all-prevailing growth was the mulberry, another Russian idea, which is used as a hedge, a fruit tree, for fuel, and as food for the silk-worm.

We wished to see a few specimen Mennonites and their homes, and called first on Jacob Schmidt, who showed us the silk-worms feeding in his best room. On tables and platforms a layer of mulberry twigs had been laid, and these were covered with thousands of worms, resembling the maple-worm. As fast as the leaves are eaten fresh twigs are added. As the worms grow, more room is provided for them, and they finally eat mulberry brush by the wagon-load. Mr. Schmidt said the floor of his garret would soon be covered. It seemed strange that the gorgeous robes of beauty should begin with this blind, crawling green worm, gnawing ravenously at a leaf.

We went next to the house of Peter Schmidt. Had I been an artist I should have sketched Peter Schmidt, of Emmathal, as the typical prosperous Mennonite. He was a big man, on the shady side of forty. His face, round as the moon, was sunburned to a walnut brown. He was very wide fore and aft; he wore a vest that buttoned to his throat, a sort of brown blouse, and a pair of very roomy and very short breeches, while his bare feet were thrust into a sort of sandals very popular with the Mennonites. The notable feature of Peter's face was a very small mouth, which was slightly spread at times with a little smile, showing his white teeth, and quite out of proportion to his immense countenance. Peter knew scarcely any English, but conversed readily through Mr.

Muntefering. He showed with pride his mulberry hedges. The plants are set out in three rows, which are cut down alternately. Peter had already cut down one row, and had a great pile of brush for firewood. The Mennonites relied at first on straw, and a mixture of straw and barnyard manure, which was dried and used for fuel, but now the wood is increasing on their lands. They have seldom or never indulged in the extravagance of coal. Another source of pride was the apricots. The seed was brought from Russia, and the trees bore plentifully last year, and the Mennonites, taking them to Newton as a lunch, were agreeably surprised by an offer of \$3 a bushel for them. Peter Schmidt, showed all his arboral treasures—apples, cherries, peaches, pears, all in bearing, where seven years ago the wind in passing found only the waving prairie grass. No wonder Peter Schmidt of Emmathal, waxed fat and smiled. He started on the prairie with \$800; he now has a farm worth \$4,000. We went into the house, of course; the door of every Mennonite is open, and the proprietor showed us his silk-worms and his possessions generally. He exhibited his Russian oven, built in the partition walls so as to warm two or three rooms, and to which is attached also a sort of brick range for cooking purposes. This device cannot be explained without a diagram. It is perfectly efficient, and the smoke at last goes into a wide chimney which is used as the family smoke-house. A happy man was Peter Schmidt, and well satisfied with his adopted country, for when I managed to mix enough German and English together to ask him how he liked America as compared with Russia, he answered in a deep voice, and with his little smile: "Besser." With a hearty goodbye to Peter Schmidt of Emmathal, we pursued our journey, passing many houses, hedges and orchards, and finally came to the home of Heinrich Richert of Blumenfeld, or Flower Field.

This place was of the more modern type. The house was a plain frame, of the American pattern, but the stable had a roof of thatch, on which the doves clung and cooed, as you see them in pictures. Not far away on either hand were two other houses, to which shaded alleys led. In one of them lived the oldest married daughter of the family. Leading up to the front door the path was lined with hedges of mulberry, trimmed very low, and flat on top, as box hedges are trimmed; and there was also a large flower-bed of intricate pattern, the property of the Misses Richert.

When Mr. Richert came in from the fields, his bright eye, his square jaw, and the way he stood on his legs showed that he was accustomed to authority. He had, in fact, been a schoolmaster in Russia, and in America occasionally exercises his gifts as a preacher. In the sitting-room, which had no carpet, but a pine floor which fairly shone, was a bookcase set in the wall and filled with books, which usually are not very common in Mennonite houses. They were all sober-colored volumes, commentaries on the Scriptures, and works on horse-doctoring. Madame Richert, a very pleasant woman, with, it may be remarked, a very pretty and small hand, gave the history of the older books, which were brought from Prussia, where her husband was born, but she herself was born in southern Russia, as were the thirteen young Richerts.

It was decided to accept the hospitality of these good people, and the



mother and daughters got supper—and such a supper! such bread and butter and preserves; and everything, nearly, on the bill of fare was the product of this six-year-old farm. At table the conversation turned on the mode of living in Russia. From Mr. Richert's description the Mennonites lived much better than most working-people in Europe. They had Brazilian coffee which came by way of Hamburg, and tea which came overland from China; then they had fish, both fresh-water fish and fish from the Sea of Azof. He said the mode of serving food had been changed somewhat since the Mennonites had migrated to this country.

After supper, Mr. Richert, his son, and the visitors, had a long talk about Russia. The treatment accorded the Mennonites by the Russian Government, up to 1871, was all that could be desired. The agreement made in the days of the Empress Catherine, what Mr. Richert called the "privilegium," were faithfully kept. The Mennonites did not own the lands, but leased them on the condition of cultivating them; the improvements were their own. The Mennonites had, in fact, very little to do with the Imperial Government; each of the fifty villages had its burgomaster, and a chief burgomaster was elected by the people. The Government transacted its business with the Mennonites through a council consisting of three Russian officials, and these performed their duty honestly—a rare thing in Russia. The Mennonites were industrious, peaceable and loyal; a Mennonite was the richest man in the Crimea, and one of the wealthiest in Russia. Everything went well until the Government, in 1871, announced its intention of enforcing a universal conscription. Against this the Mennonites protested. Ten years was given them to yield or to leave. Thousands left. In 1881 the Government revoked the "privilegium," compelled the remaining Mennonites to take lands in severalty, and began to introduce the Russian language into the Mennonite schools. Russia's loss is our gain.

At breakfast the conversation turned on the wonderful success of the Mennonites with all kinds of trees, quite excelling anything known by Americans, with all their low-spirited horticultural societies. *Herr* Richert remarked that one thing that helped the trees was "plowing the dew under." This is one of the secrets of Mennonite success—they "plow the dew under" in the morning, and do not stop plowing till the dew falls at evening.

The history of *Herr* Richert was that of all the Mennonites we talked with. He had come to this country with \$1,000; at the end of the second year he was \$1,300 in debt, but had lifted the load and was now the possessor of a fine farm. The Mennonites, we may say, bought their lands in alternate sections of the railroad company, and in most cases bought the intervening sections of individual owners. They have been prompt to pay. Many of the Mennonites were very poor. To provide these with land, a large sum was borrowed from wealthy Mennonites in the east. The beneficiaries are now prosperous, and the money has been faithfully repaid. Besides this, a mission has been maintained in the Indian Territory, and a considerable sum has been recently forwarded to aid destitute brethren in Russia.

To continue our journey: our next stop was to call on a settler who

wore a beard, a Cossack cap, and looked the Russian more than any other man we met. He took us into a room, to show us some tatar lambskin coats, which was a perfect copy of a room in Russia; with its sanded floor, its wooden settees painted red and green, its huge carved chest studded with great brass-headed bolts, and its brass lock-plate, all scoured to perfect brightness. In a little cupboard was a shining store of brass and silver table-ware. It was like a visit to Molotschna.

At the humble dwelling of Johann Krause we witnessed the process of reeling raw silk. The work was done by Mrs. Krause, on a rude twister and reel of home construction. The cocoons were placed in a trough of boiling water, and the woman, with great dexterity, caught up the threads of light cocoons, twisting them into two threads and running these on the reel. The work required infinite patience, of which few Americans are possessed. The Mennonites carried on the silk-raising business in Russia with great success, and bid fair to make it a great interest here.

After leaving Johann Krause, we made few more halts, but drove for miles with many Mennonite houses in sight, and the most promising orchards and immense fields of the greenest wheat. I have never seen elsewhere such a picture of agricultural prosperity.

If anyone has not yet made up his mind as to the possibilities of Kansas agriculture, I recommend a visit to the Mennonite settlements. It is not difficult of accomplishment, as the points I visited in Harvey, McPherson and Marion counties can be reached by a few miles drive from Newton or Halstead, on the main line of the Atchinson, Topeka & Santa Fe, or from Canton, Hillsboro and other stations on the Marion & McPherson branch.

It is a matter, I regret to say, of uncertainty, whether the work begun by these Mennonite settlers will be completed. If the sons and grandsons of Peter Schmidt, of Emmathal, and Heinrich Richert, of Blumenfeld, will walk in the ways of those worthy men, the result will be something like fairyland—the fairies being, however, substantial men, weighing about 185 pounds each. The orchards will bud and bloom, and amid them will stand the solid brick houses, like those of Russia, and the richest farmers of Kansas will dwell therein. But there is a danger that this will not come to pass. Jacob and David will go to work on the railroad, and let the plow take care of itself; and Susanna and Aganetha will go out to service in the towns, and fall to wearing fine clothes and marrying American Gentiles; and the evil day may come when the descendant of the Mennonites of the old stock will be cushioning store-boxes, saving the Nation with his mouth, or even going about like a roaring lion, seeking a nomination for Congress. I wish I could believe it otherwise. I wish our atmosphere did not make us all so smart that we cannot enjoy good health. Were it not for that accursed vanity and restlessness which is our heritage, I could indulge in a vision of the future—of a peaceful quiet, wealthy people, undisturbed by the throes of speculation or politics, dwelling in great content under the vines and mulberry trees which their fathers planted in the grassy, wind-swept wilderness.

# Christian Krehbiel and the Coming of the Mennonites to Kansas

Autobiography

Translated and edited by Edward Krehbiel

## FOREWORD

In the twilight of his life, my father, Christian Krehbiel of Halstead, Kansas, devoted much of his time to the writing of his autobiography. Its closing sentence was written on January 17, 1907. A few pages before he wrote: "As writing was never a gift with which I was endowed, how could it be a special talent in my seventy-fifth year? Only in response to the pleas of my sons have I recorded the experiences of my life, relying almost wholly on my memory. The chronology of events must then be uncertain."

In the sections of the memoirs covering his later years, he several times mentions his diary; and that part contains more exact details than the narrative of his earlier years, which includes the story of the Mennonite immigration from Europe. Written intermittently at an advanced age, largely from memory and without any systematic reference to his records, it will surprise no one that this section discloses repetitions, omissions, an occasional lack of continuity and some inaccuracies in fact and detail.

Shortly after father's death in 1909, I transcribed a part of the manuscript of his memoirs and my brother-in-law, H. O. Kruse, transcribed the balance. This typewritten transcription was re-typed into clean form in 1947 under the direction of my brothers, the late C. E. Krehbiel, and L. P. Krehbiel of Halstead, Kansas.

No part of the actual text of this autobiography has heretofore appeared in print in any form anywhere. *The History of the General Conference of the Mennonites of North America* by H. P. Krehbiel, and particularly the biography of Christian Krehbiel which appears in that work, and is reprinted in abbreviated form here, contain much data to be found in his father's memoirs; but as that history was published in 1898, its author must have obtained the information first-hand from his father rather than from the autobiography that was written in later years.

Though the translation here published follows the outline of the original text, it is not a literal translation. I have rearranged some of the material to secure unity and continuity; have combined passages that are repetitious; have now and then compressed or abbreviated paragraphs; have omitted most sections that do not deal directly with Mennonite migrations; and have for the sake of clarity, inserted some dates or notes, usually in parentheses. Throughout I have tried to convey the uncolored meaning of the original narrative and to retain its character and spirit. I should add that I have made no researches to check the narrative for accuracy, though I have corrected obvious errors.





CHRISTIAN KREHBIEL

(1832-1909)

It will be seen that I have inserted into the text of father's story some pertinent excerpts from the autobiography of my mother Susanna Krehbiel. Father devoted his writing almost wholly to his church activities. After his death my mother, urged by her children, wrote the domestic story of the family.

Father's autobiography runs to 244 typed pages (an estimated 70,000 words) of which 55 pages are devoted to the part here translated. Mother's autobiography covers 84 pages of type, about 24,000 words.

## FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CHRISTIAN KREHBIEL

Times were troublous in the Seventies not only in America but also in Germany, France, and Russia. In Prussia the exemption of Mennonites from military service had been withdrawn, and the fear that Russia too would withdraw it soon, proved to be correct.

In the preceding years I had often had visitors in Summerfield, Illinois, where I then lived, from brethren in Prussia and Russia and through them had learned much of the conditions in their homelands. Among these was Aaron Wiebe from Prussia with whom I subsequently maintained a steady correspondence; and Bernhard Warkentin of whom I shall have much to write later on. Through my correspondence as well as through newspaper articles I was kept quite well informed of the reaction of the Mennonites in Prussia and Russia to the requirement that they perform military duty.

There was at that time a large Mennonite congregation in Berdiansk, Russia, whose elder was Leonhard Sudermann. He and representatives of several other Mennonite congregations were delegated to present a petition in St. Petersburg praying for the continuation of the non-military privileges of the Mennonites.

One of the members of Sudermann's church was Cornelius Jansen who, like Sudermann, was from Prussia and well educated. He was Prussian consul in Berdiansk and a man of great vision. A trend having developed in the Berdiansk congregation to seek a new home somewhere in Asia, Jansen cast his eyes toward America. To learn something of American conditions he wrote to various people here. One of his letters was directed to Daniel Hege but with an address in Pennsylvania. The letter came into the hands of John Oberholzer who, at that time, was the publisher of a Mennonite periodical and president of the General Conference. Conditions among the European Mennonites were then less well known to those in the East than to us in the West. Accordingly, Oberholzer sent Jansen's letter to me in Summerfield. Hege was no longer living. Obviously, so important an inquiry must have an answer and I undertook to reply. Out of that decision there grew my extensive participation in the immigration of European Mennonites into America.

I wrote Jansen at length depicting American conditions as fully and as truthfully as I could with my limited experience at writing. But because I realized that in Europe conditions in America were measured in terms of European experience, and that what I wrote might easily be misconstrued and misunderstood, I closed my letter with a paragraph to the following effect: My description of conditions here is accurate in accordance with our knowledge of things and the way we view them; but in order to prevent any misunderstanding, I feel I must add that in this country every ordinary farmer and every business man in ordinary circumstances *must* be his own best workman. For I knew that many Prussian and Russian landowners did little work with their own hands. Management was their function—cheap labor did the actual work. I wanted it understood that that system could not be employed in America.

It was not long before I had Jansen's reply, thanking me for the information I had given and saying that he understood it all quite well except the closing sentence. He could see that if a hired hand was sick one's own son would feed the horses; or if a maid was ill or away one's daughter would do the milking; but that every owner must be his own best worker, that he could not understand.

I had attained my purpose; I had correctly surmised that they would not grasp this point in Russia; and should they come to America unwarned and face the bald facts in person, they might accuse me of misrepresentation.

To clear up the matter I wrote Jansen how dear labor was in America and how, because of high wages and great opportunity, ambitious young people could easily start out for themselves, so that it was impossible to hold good laborers for any length of time; one had accordingly to get along with young, inexperienced help, or perchance with the less intelligent types or the old; failing which one often had to make out without any outside help at all. I expressed the hope that with this amplification he would grasp the purport of my earlier closing sentence, and would convey it to any persons contemplating coming to America, so that I might suffer no reproaches for false reports. Later when immigrants arrived I learned that my warning words had come to the attention of many.

I might note here that Jansen also corresponded with friends in Canada, and was instrumental in directing a large movement of Mennonites from Russia to that country.

In the summer of 1872 four Mennonite young men who had left Europe came to Summerfield, Illinois: Bernhard Warkentin, Philip Wiebe, Peter Dyck, and Jacob Buhr. They were traveling for pleasure and experience, not primarily to look for settlement sites. Still they thought they might learn something to the advantage of their distressed home folks and to that end traveled through parts of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa. During their trip Warkentin's wife died in Europe and he decided to spend the following winter in Summerfield. This sojourn led to a life-long friendship between us.

That a Russian Mennonite was staying in Summerfield, and that a large delegation from Russia was expected in 1873 to explore lands which, if found satisfactory, might attract large numbers of immigrants, soon became known to the western railroads, which owned large tracts of lands in Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, and other states. Assuming that Warkentin was an advance agent, they sent representatives to Summerfield to appraise him, and all of us, of the their available lands and to offer us free transportation for inspection tours. One of these, a Texan, took Warkentin, J. E. Schmidt and others of the Summerfield church for a journey through Texas. Though they were pleased with the soil there, they felt Texas was not suited to Mennonites from Russia as the climate was too warm.

George Herriot, an Englishman, was then a land-agent for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company. On the instructions of his superiors he also sought us in Summerfield, praised his company's open lands and presented plans for colonizing them. He also offered free trans-



portation to examine the lands and discover their good qualities. After several such visits Warkentin and others of our community decided to explore Kansas. They were favorably impressed and when A. E. Touzalin, an important official of the Santa Fe railroad, held out prospects of very favorable colonizing terms, Warkentin left on him the impression that he would persuade the delegation expected from Russia to see Kansas. No doubt he felt, and quite rightly, that the detailed reports he had sent to Russia would prevail on the coming delegates to select him at least as guide, if not as leader. In this he was greatly mistaken, for the deputation, as it was called, ignored him.

The deputation of 1873, representing various Russian and Prussian Mennonite congregations, at first passed by Summerfield. Traveling via Pennsylvania it headed for Canada which offered exemption from military service and other conditions including closed settlements in Manitoba.

After the deputation had made its tour of Canada some of its members decided to visit parts of the United States, and Warkentin went to meet them, and accompanied them through Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri to Summerfield.

Three members of the deputation, the brethren Peters, Wiebe and Buhr, reached Summerfield ahead of the others. Soon after their arrival, Mr. Goodenow, a rather smooth representative of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, appeared in Summerfield to laud his company's lands and offer free transportation for inspection. As the prices he quoted seemed to be so very favorable, the three deputies decided to see the lands. However, they needed interpreters and as we, in the Summerfield Church had become interested in finding new lands for ourselves, John A. Ruth and I were delegated to accompany them.

We went to Parsons, Kansas, and scouted in various directions from that center, going as far as the Kansas-Texas boundary. Under the then prevailing practice, the railroad companies, as a bonus for building the roads, received certain grants of land paralleling the line from the government. Before the roads were built some of these grant lands had been occupied by pioneers who had, in many cases, erected buildings and made other improvements. There were not a few such pioneers on lands the Missouri, Kansas and Texas claimed near Parsons, and we learned later that the railroad company was even then planning to evict them. Goodenow showed us these properties in particular and when we, sensing that all was not right, showed no interest, he sought to intrigue us by quoting prices that were certainly invitingly low. The settlers somehow learned of Goodenow's maneuvers and after we had been in Parsons three days a large crowd of menacing men gathered before our hotel. We realized that something was up but didn't know what. Presently one of them, a German from Pennsylvania, approached and asked: "Is Goodenow trying to sell you settled and improved lands?" We replied that we had been offered such, upon which he returned: "Then let me warn you that, if you buy these lands, you are in for trouble with the settlers who are determined to keep the lands they have even if it means violence. If you buy these lands and try to occupy them you will be shot." Upon that I calmed the spokesman, saying that we had no intention of buying the lands as they did not suit our purpose;

and that, even if they did, we would certainly not contribute to others' losing the lands they had, for we were farmers ourselves and would side with our kind and not with the railroad company. That ended the episode.

(Krehbiel was summoned home from Parsons by a telegram reporting the serious illness of his eldest son, David, 14 years old, and after a trying journey he reached Summerfield shortly before his son's death of scarlet fever. E.K.)

Two brothers, Peter and Jacob Funk from Crimea and their large families arrived in Summerfield about this time, and settled there temporarily as a place from which to seek a permanent home. A. E. Touzalin, of the Santa Fe, learned of their presence. He knew from his associate, Mr. Herriot, that I was a Kansas booster, as was Warkentin also; he also knew that Cornelius Jansen (a Canada backer), having been ordered to leave Russia because of his promotion of immigration, had arrived in Canada. Touzalin telegraphed me to come to Topeka at once at his expense. I did not know what he wanted and had neither the time nor the inclination to make the trip. However Brother Leisy urged me to go; and when the Funk brothers, learning of the invitation, offered to go with me, I accepted.

Having arrived in Topeka, Mr. Touzalin tried to persuade me, at railroad company expense, to join the deputation, then leaving Canada, and travel with its members through Nebraska and induce them to come to Kansas. That definitely did not appeal to me and I told Touzalin candidly that I had too much personal pride to attach myself to the deputees as an uninvited tail; and that, in any case, doing so would serve his ends much less effectively than selling the Funk brothers some good lands at a low price, for that would give him the first Mennonite settlers from Russia on his railroad lands. He got the point.

Thus it came about that my first inspection trip of Santa Fe-owned lands in Kansas was made in company with the Funks. That these men were well-to-do, I knew, and told Touzalin so. But I did not know what money they were carrying with them. Before we set out westward Touzalin suggested to them that, if they had unnecessary funds about them, it would be wise to deposit them in a bank to avoid the risk of robbery. They, however, did nothing about it.

Our guide at the outset from Topeka was A. S. Johnson, reputed to be the first white child born in Kansas, son of a missionary to the Indians. We first went over the country about Florence and Marion Centre, Kansas. It was practically all still prairie land. From there we went westward beyond the present site of Moundridge. Then Johnson took us to Newton, and next to Halstead, both then small places. The Funks wanted to go from Halstead to Burrton. We looked for a conveyance but could find nothing better than a shaky old wagon and a pair of skinny horses. Our driver went so slow that Jacob Funk seized the reins and whip to show how one drives in Russia. But he quickly gave it up, fearing he would kill the poor beasts.

After we had viewed quite extensive areas in the central part of Kansas, the Funk brothers decided that they would buy lands near Marion Center, and we returned to Topeka to close the deal. The chief clerk in

Touzalin's office was a well-educated German from Dresden, a very dapper and friendly person, who served as interpreter. The two sections of land selected by the Funks were offered to them at \$4.00 an acre. They counter-offered \$2.50 an acre, a price that was probably lower than Touzalin was empowered to accept. Now this first prospective sale to a Mennonite was of such importance to the Santa Fe Railroad Company that its President, W. B. Strong, had himself come to Topeka. He went to work on me, seeking to persuade me that the land in question was worth \$4.00 an acre, which I did not dispute. Said he: "At \$2.50 an acre we will buy all the land we can get in that neighborhood." In rejoinder I remarked that his company would do better to make the Funks a present of the two sections than to let the men go to Nebraska, Minnesota, or elsewhere and buy there; for wherever they settled, they were sure eventually to be joined by considerable numbers of other immigrants. That scored. The railroad officials went into a huddle. Then I found myself put to it to keep the Funks from raising their offer—they would rather have paid the \$4.00 price than lose the lands. But in the end they got the property at \$2.50 an acre, and this sale later fruited in big business for the Santa Fe Railroad Company.

When the Funks reached the stage of paying for the land they had purchased, it came out that between them they had carried \$50,000 in cash on their land-hunting tour. Out of that they paid for the properties; but now they did deposit the balance in a bank. They would have been wiser to do so before making the trip. They looked affluent, and I saw many a greedy glance cast at them during our journey in what was then still very definitely the frontier.

With this land purchase the die was cast for Kansas. Touzalin now wished me to buy a section of land for myself at the same low price. When I told him I hadn't the means to buy, he offered to make a reservation for me. I accepted on the condition that I should be permitted to exchange it at the same price for an equal acreage in any region in which the Summerfielder might settle. He agreed, and I made a deposit of \$50.00 then and there. I note here that later I surrendered this reserved section to Wilhelm Ewert.

Upon our return to Summerfield the Funks and their families forthwith set out for Kansas, where they lived in a small house on one of the farms and put in their first winter, 1873-1874, making preparations for the future.

On July 24, 1873, Leonhard Sudermann, Jacob Buller, Wilhelm Ewert, and Andreas Schrag, members of the deputation, escorted by Jacob Y. Shantz of Canada, arrived in Summerfield from Elkhart, Indiana, for a short visit. Their presence drew many others including railroad men, and there was a great stir and much coming and going. There were noted preachers among the visitors who expounded the Word of God as the occasion offered to the spiritual blessing and nourishment of their hearers. Much was said of conditions in Russia and of the land surveys in America. When I inquired whether the deputies now planned to see Kansas and Texas, Sudermann replied that they had completed their inspection tours. That was a painful bit of news for Warkentin and to soften it for him I ventured the observation to Sudermann that, if the commission from their



congregations was to find a place to settle that pleased the deputies, then they had indeed ended their search; but that if their commission was to find the best land available, then they had not fully discharged their mandate, for they had not seen Kansas or Texas, and could accordingly not include them in their report.

My statement did not affect all hearers alike. Ewert declared, "Krehbiel is right; I am going to make the trip." Buller announced that he would go too. Sudermann chose to go on East, preaching here and there on the way, and Schrag and Shantz went with him. (It will be seen later that Sudermann settled in Kansas, near Newton, after all).

The brethren Buller and Ewert, escorted by Warkentin, made a flying trip to Kansas and Texas. On their return Buller flatly declared that he would not choose Kansas as it was too warm; but he asked me why I favored the state. I replied that it was because in Kansas one required fewer clothes, less fuel, less winter fodder and had a longer warm season in which to do the necessary farm work than farther north. That, I declared, appealed to me in preference to having to dig corn stalks and cattle feed out of snow. Buller did not contradict me, but he stuck to his views. Yet man proposes and God disposes. Without any further intervention on my part Buller and his vast congregation from Alexanderwohl, Russia, eventually did come to Kansas.

On my trip with the Funks I had noticed the good lands in the vicinity of Halstead, Kansas. My favorable impression of it was confirmed on a later journey, and also by other members of the Summerfield Church who traveled in the West. Our recommendations prompted the Church to appoint a delegation of members to examine the lands about Halstead more exactly, and to enter into a provisional agreement for acquiring them. I do not recall the names of all the delegates appointed. Among them were Jacob Leisy, David Lehmann, David C. Ruth, Abraham Stauffer and I. David Goerz, who then already lived in Summerfield, decided to join us with his wife in order to visit her parents who had previously located near Marion Centre, Kansas. The party left Summerfield by rail on October 8, 1873. It was joined enroute by Warkentin, Flaming, and Johannes Fast, a teacher, and the party finally numbered twelve men. The railroad provided free transportation for us all. On arrival at Topeka Mr. Touzalin assigned a Mr. Kopper to act as conductor of our party.

He took us to Emporia by rail and we first covered the region for some distance to the south of it, and then that to the north of it as far as Council Grove. Then we shifted to Marion Centre and operated to the east and the west from there. Land agent Billings joined Kopper there, and these two provided horses and spring wagons in which we drove back and forth over the whole neighborhood.

As we were to be in Marion Centre over Sunday, the Funks, who, as related, had located near there, invited us to hold religious services in their home. That was probably the first church service held by Mennonites in Kansas, and there I preached my first sermon in the state.

It was easy to see that the region about Marion Centre abounded in good soil and had pleasing small streams and gentle hills and valleys. We



BERNHARD WARKENTIN

(1847-1908)

were particularly taken by the valley in which the Wiebe *Krimmer Brueder-Gemeinde* lies today. (1906). Though our group preferred to locate nearer a railroad line and I had in my own mind selected Halstead as the spot, I was strongly tempted to make a tentative reservation here for the Summerfield membership. However, Fast who, as noted, was traveling with us, had been commissioned by Wiebe's congregation in Russia to reserve suitable lands for that body, and as he found it very hard to make a decision, he appealed to me to do it for him. Waiving our own interest in the tract I recommended that he reserve it for his church body, which he did.

From Marion Centre our company proceeded towards Halstead partly by rail and partly by wagon. We viewed the terrain in the vicinity of Peabody and Walton but didn't like it. We went on to Newton, which was a main station of the railroad, where Mr. Muse and Captain John Spivey were added as guides to our party. First we drove west and northwest beyond the present position of Moundridge; then back to Newton and south of it for quite a distance. Next we explored Halstead and the surrounding country, both south and north along the Little Arkansas River and Turkey Creek to Mountain View. In that neighborhood we had to spend a night, which we did in the house of a pioneer who, to make room for us, went with his fifteen year-old wife to a neighbor for the night. In the morning he went out early in the hope of shooting some game for our breakfast but failed, very likely because a cold storm came in out of the West.

We were advised not to consider locating farther to the west; nevertheless to show us that this was good counsel we were taken by rail to Great Bend and Larned. At Larned I dug three feet into the ground and found no change in the soil. I stated then that, if it rained as it does in St. Louis, I should certainly buy land there. We continued west to the Kansas boundary line (I am not sure whether on this or a later trip) to Granada, Colorado, which was then the end of the railroad line. The stations west of Larned were sod houses. The train conductor told me that on one of his earlier trips a buffalo herd numbering in the thousands had stormed across the track ahead of the train and there was nothing to do but wait for the herd to clear the road. On this trip I saw my first Indians from the train, riding along in single file some distance away. The soil in that western region was good but covered with buffalo grass. The railroad land agents asserted that as cultivation extended westward there would be more rain in the region, which seems to have been proven correct; in the year in which I write this (1906) it rained more in Western Kansas than in Halstead.

On returning to Topeka we entered into preliminary negotiations with the Santa Fe for the purchase of extensive tracts and Mr. Touzalin agreed to reserve for us all railroad company lands in four townships. We arrived at home in Summerfield on October 26, 1873, in good health grateful to God for His guidance.

Now followed a voluminous correspondence with the Santa Fe land office in Topeka. The burden of it fell on me. As I could not write English, C. B. Schmidt of the railroad land office in Topeka, arranged for German translations of all correspondence. The actual contracts were, of course, in



English. As it was difficult to arrive at precise understandings through correspondence, all the more because I insisted that my fellow church members join in all decisions; and also because Mr. Touzalin wanted to assure himself that we were competent to execute our end of any agreement, he himself came to Summerfield in December, 1873, to close the deal. That took place in our small Summerfield church.

Under the contract entered into with the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company, the railroad company agreed to reserve for us exclusively for five years all unsold company-owned lands in Township 21, South, Range 2 West, McPherson County, and in Townships 22, 23 and 24 South, Range 2 West in Harvey County; to secure for us a mill site with a dam, and with water-rights extending seven miles up stream along the Little Arkansas River then owned by a Mr. Allbright; to advance the cost price of transportation for all persons and goods of our group; to have all trains make a stop at Halstead; and to sell us the lands at prices that I here explain. An appraisal price had been put by the railroad company on all lands it offered for sale. We obligated ourselves to buy and pay for a specified number of sections of land before the first of April, 1874. We were to be given a 56% discount from the company's book or appraisal price on all land taken up by April 1, whether paid for in full at the time of selection or taken under a firm contract fixing the date of final payment. The remainder of the lands, not taken up under the above conditions, were to be reserved for us for five years and to be available to any of our body at a 36% discount from appraisal price, plus taxes and 10% simple interest. None of the land was to be sold to any other than our company within five years without our written consent.

When we had reached a meeting of minds on these matters the question arose as to who should sign the contract in our behalf, seeing that we were not a legally organized body. Mr. Touzalin resolved the difficulty by proposing that the group designate me as its trustee, and that I sign in that capacity. This plan was adopted.

That let me in for much added work, much correspondence and the necessity of making some difficult decisions. To protect ourselves, we had required the railroad company to provide us with township maps showing the exact appraisal price of each piece of land. I had authorized some persons, who did not live in Summerfield, to buy into the area reserved for us, which I had the power to do, only to discover that in such cases the appraisal price quoted the prospective buyer was higher than that shown by the charts. When I protested the correct prices were accepted.

Mr. Touzalin placed a private car at the disposal of our party for a trip to Halstead to make our individual selections of land. About thirty men from the Summerfield and certain Iowa congregations made the journey to Kansas early in January, 1874, again accompanied by a railroad representative. At Halstead the car was put on a side-track and served as our hotel during our entire stay.

Selecting a piece of land was not easy, not because of any great difference in the qualities of the soil, but because prices ranged from about \$2.00 to \$15.00 an acre, according to distance from towns or other factors

that had impressed the appraisers. Land along creeks or even dry water courses was appraised high; some of the flat prairie land was appraised quite low.

That each person would want for himself what he considered the best land was at once evident, and, being leader of the group, I decided to make no selection for myself until everyone else had first made his. One of the company had picked out two sections of land, but then wanted to give one up for another that he liked better, before all others had made their choice. This did not seem fair and the privilege was denied him.

Much to the surprise of the railway men the buyers passed by the higher priced tracts along creeks and water courses and chose higher lying pieces. Later experience showed that they had exercised good judgment.

The mill site, which was available to us under our contract, embraced 160 acres. Warkentin, who was a miller and planned to build a mill in Halstead, offered to buy the tract at its high price. However, to our embarrassment Peter Wiebe announced that he wanted the property. It was decided to cast lots, and in order to give Warkentin two chances I decided to participate. The lot fell in my favor, and I offered to transfer my right to the first person offering me \$50.00. Warkentin made that offer at once, but I preferred another arrangement. I proposed that Warkentin take 80 acres, and that Wiebe take the other 80 acres. That was accepted and the affair was amicably disposed of.

(The following passage relating to the above land selection trip to Kansas is drawn from the autobiography of Susanna Krehbiel, wife of Christian Krehbiel, "I can say here with good conscience that Father did not take advantage of his position to make a single penny for himself, and would not have accepted it if offered. He often declared: No man shall ever be able to say that he had made Christian Krehbiel a rich man; he would attain such status only by the labor of his own hands and the blessing of God. He followed this principle when any one made him a gift as preacher, which rarely happened; he put it into a special fund to be used for charitable purposes.")

As noted, being leader of our company, I postponed my selection of a piece of land until every one else had chosen. By that time all the land near Halstead was taken up except the east half of Section 1, Township 24, I had privately kept this whole section in view, and now selected the half that was available, as a piece that I could exchange for the parcel previously reserved for me in Marion County. Whether this exchange could be effected was a question. (Krehbiel later also secured the west half of Section 1, just southeast of Halstead where he lived the remainder of his life. E. K.)

To make sure that I got a full section of land I had to go far north of Halstead to the country between Newton and McPherson. There I selected Section 27, at \$4.00 an acre, in the expectation that a town would be established in the neighborhood. Indeed when Christian Voran, Christian Hirschler, and my brother Daniel bought the sections adjoining mine, we jointly laid out a town site and named it Christian, Kansas. My brother opened a store, and we built a church on the corner of my land. However, when

the Missouri Pacific Railroad built its line from Newton to McPherson and, in spite of all our efforts, placed its station about a mile to the north at Moundridge, we dissolved the town of Christian. The Christian Mennonite church survived though another congregation, known as West Zion, was founded at Moundridge.

In 1874 Warkentin began building a mill at Halstead in partnership with the Mr. Allbright previously mentioned. As Warkentin was away a good deal in connection with affairs relating to the immigrants arriving from Russia, he was treated badly by his partner, and things did not go well. Then he married the daughter of Conrad Eisenmeyer, an experienced miller, and he and his father-in-law bought out Allbright and converted the mill into a steam plant. It was an immediate success and Warkentin, who also owned two sections of land bought at colonist's prices, eventually became a rich man.

Peter Wiebe founded a lumber business in Halstead in 1874. In the fall of the same year John W. Ruth and Daniel Haury of Summerfield went to Halstead, built small houses and began breaking the prairie on their farms north of town. Quite a few others from Summerfield also went to Halstead that same year.

(From the auto-biography of Susanna Krehbiel) As I dreaded settling in Kansas on the raw, wild prairie so near to Indians, Father urged me to go with him on a trip he made in May, 1874. I had to take Bernhard, then a baby, and as he proved to be a poor, car-sick traveler, it turned out to be a hard journey. We had to travel at night but we could not afford a sleeper. At Topeka we had to lay over while Father worked on contracts with Mr. Touzalin. We went on the next morning and, shortly after leaving Topeka, a porter came and took us to the private car of Mr. Touzalin, whom we had had in our home in Summerfield. He and Father talked business, while I enjoyed the welcome conveniences until we reached Halstead that evening.

In Halstead we met Peter Wiebe, who was building his house and Warkentin, who, with his partner Allbright, was building a mill. We all had to stay at the Sweezy Hotel which was packed with people including a gang of laborers building a bridge over the river near the mill. Father got a team of horses and a farm wagon from Peter Wiebe and on Saturday we drove around over the prairie while Father made selections of lands for various persons who had commissioned him to do so. He had a map to work from and had to hunt up survey stakes to see just what tracts were still for sale. We had a picnic lunch on the prairie and at sundown arrived at the Rupps. They had a very small cabin to accommodate their colony of twelve persons. Yet they received Father, me and baby Bernhard with cordial welcome. We spent Sunday there. On Monday we returned to Halstead. The sun and the hot winds gave Bernhard such a sunburn that his skin peeled. On Tuesday we went over the neighborhood southeast of Halstead while Father sought to pick out a quarter section of land for school purposes, that was to be given free by the railroad company. That day we also had a good look at the tract Father had selected for us, the east half section of our present (1912) home. I didn't like it, it was too sandy; but it had been bought and nothing could be done about it.



After a ten-day trip we got back to Summerfield and what I had seen made it possible for me better to adjust myself to the future. (End of passage from S. K.)

That fall grasshoppers in dense swarms descended on Kansas and ate up everything that was green or soft. Christian Hirschler, who had his first stand of corn in the fields, tried to save something by cutting and shocking some of the corn; but the grasshoppers ate even the shocks. The insects lay so thick on the railroad tracks that the engines slipped and stalled. Throughout that part of Kansas and as far as Tipton, Missouri, the pest left everything bare and black, as I saw when traveling there that fall. It was terrifying. And yet some good came of it. Great sympathy was awakened in the East for the pioneers, who had not been there long enough to get on their feet, and train loads of supplies poured into Kansas to help the unfortunates. The Santa Fe, and probably all other railroads, hauled these supplies without charge.

It can well be imagined that we in Summerfield faced our ambitious plan of removing to Kansas with considerable misgiving when the first large body set out in the spring of 1875. My family did not go with this group but I did. How vastly greater the distances now seemed when we had to cover them in farm wagons instead of buggies drawn by fleet ponies. All illusions disappeared; only our courage and faith in God remained.

The founding of the Mennonite church in Halstead occurred in March, 1875. It was the chief reason for my going to Kansas that spring, though on this trip I also went to Florence in behalf of the wretched company of immigrants stranded there. Of this elsewhere.

It was important that the many members of my Summerfield congregation, who had gone to Halstead, should not be without a church and religious services. So it was that, at my instigation and under my leadership, the Halstead Mennonite Church was organized on Easter Sunday, March 28, 1875, in the home of Jacob Dettweiler. My brother, Valentin Krehbiel, was named preacher, John Haury and Daniel Bachmann, deacons. I and several others preached sermons, holy communion was celebrated and the church regulations were formulated, adopted and later transcribed by David Goerz. I had preached in a district school house in Halstead on an earlier trip and that is believed to be the first sermon to be delivered in Halstead. In any case the Mennonite church was the first church in Halstead.

(Note. Krehbiel, as stated, did not take his family to Kansas with the early groups leaving Summerfield. As he does not again refer to this subject, I draw on mother's autobiography to complete the story at this point; and incidentally to give a picture of what preparing for pioneering meant. E. K.)

The fall of 1878 meant much hard work for my sister, Katie, who lived with us, and me. We were to move to Kansas in March, 1879. There was no fruit in the land to which we were going. We had an abundance of it in Summerfield and the art of canning had just become known to us. We must then manage to put up as much as possible to take with us. Any of my children who had a part in this will not have forgotten it. Every

evening after school the children had to pick apples or other fruits. During the week a wagon-full would accumulate that had to be put up in some form on Saturday. Some apples went into vinegar, some were dried, others canned in tin—glass containers were then not known—still others were made into apple butter. We ended up with sixteen barrels of vinegar, three sugar-barrels of dried apples, three hundred quarts of canned apples, and one hundred gallons of apple butter. The grape crop that fall was good and we put up seven barrels of wine and also a lot of sweet pickles. All this planning and strenuous work I prefer to write no more about. (End from S. K.)

Already in 1873 smaller groups of Mennonites from Russia began to arrive in Summerfield, and in Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota. To help the immigrants an Aid Committee was formed in Pennsylvania, probably on the instigation of Cornelius Jansen. In order to do our part in giving practical help to the oncoming immigrants we formed a committee in Summerfield called the Mennonite Board of Guardians. I was named chairman, Warkentin, president, and David Goerz, secretary of this Board. (John F. Funk later became treasurer).

The Aid Committee established connections with the Red Star shipping lines whose headquarters were in Philadelphia. A certain Francis Funk of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company took the Aid Committee under his wing and steered all its immigration traffic via Red Star Line over our northern railroads.

Cornelius Jansen (who had close contacts with the Aid Committee and probably with Mr. Funk) had secured very favorable transportation and colonizing arrangements from the Canadian Government, and he sought similar conditions in Washington for Mennonite colonists who might come to the United States. He wanted Congress to set aside a large tract somewhere in the West as a closed area to be reserved to Mennonites only. He received some encouragement, too; but Carl Schurz, who was then United States Senator from Missouri flatly told him that his plan would never be approved. Jansen complained bitterly of Schurz to me when he visited Summerfield soon after; but I told him that Schurz was the only man who had told him the naked truth while others were side-stepping the issue. Congress, I said, to make sure that frontier lands went to actual settlers and not to speculators, had passed extensive and well-considered legislation and was not likely to re-open or alter it to fit special interests such as Jansen represented. (It is probable that Jansen's failure to secure the conditions he wanted disposed him to favor settlement in Canada.)

The eastern and Canadian interests wanted us to serve them as handymen, helping to pay for the transportation of immigrants, which would have given the Red Star Line the profits from carrying passengers; but leaving to us alone the caring for the needy colonists after their arrival at their destination. We were prepared to cooperate with the Aid Committee on a fair basis. The steamship companies and the eastern railroads were chiefly interested in getting the immigrants as passengers; the western railroad lines had that interest too, but also a more important one: getting buyers for their lands and colonists who would develop the country they

served and feed the railroad. For these reasons there was keener competition between the western roads which we could and did exploit for the benefit of our co-religionists. In this Mr. Touzalin and C. B. Schmidt were very helpful to us. The former had contacts and influence with the eastern railroads, and the latter, a German, got along well with the German steamship companies.

The Red Star Line was not as well equipped to handle immigrant traffic as some other steamship companies and accordingly our Board of Guardians, through the mediation of C. B. Schmidt of the Santa Fe Railroad, tied up with the Inman Line and made arrangements with them for through transportation from Europe to Kansas and other western states.

Working out these arrangements brought agents of various steamship and railroad companies to Summerfield, and we had to put them up in our home. (I insert here a pertinent passage from Susanna Krehbiel's autobiography. She wrote that many persons from Europe, coming in advance of the main body of immigrants, stopped in Summerfield to seek information or advice, and often were house guests. She continues as follows: E. K.)

It was much less difficult for me to have these guests than it was to accommodate the big men from the steamship or railroad companies, who came in the interest of their concerns and whom we usually had to quarter in our modest home. As we had only a dining room and kitchen on the ground floor, they had to sit in the dining room, where our baby lay in its crib, and through which we had to go back and forth to reach the cellar or get meals. If they could not stay in the open for the night, we put them up in the hired hands' room next to the kitchen. For me and my sister Katie, who lived with us, these were trying experiences, for we did not, as today, have canned goods and few supplies were to be had in Summerfield; and even had there been, there was no telephone or delivery. We couldn't bother Father with our troubles for he himself was a plagued and driven man. If he was not in conference with some one or traveling, he was busy almost day and night with correspondence, struggling to make the needs of the immigrants known and to raise means to help them to new homes. (End quote from Susanna Krehbiel.)

A representative of the Inman Line, Mr. Falk, handed Goerz a closely printed draft of a contract which would have committed the Board of Guardians to apply any funds it collected to the payment of transportation charges before meeting any other obligations. This ran directly counter to our prime objective which was to give priority to helping immigrants to acquire lands on which to settle, and to furnish them the farm equipment needed to get started. After much discussion I took the instrument—I still have it—read it carefully word for word and at last told Falk I would sign the contract if he would strike out one single word from the text. He remarked: "Krehbiel, you'd make a good steamship company manager." He struck out the word, and the contract, which in other respects was very favorable, was executed.

Mr. Falk now wanted to give this contract publicity and suggested the issuance of a regular leaflet. This led to the decision to publish *Zur Heimat*, with David Goerz as editor and John F. Funk of Elkhart, who had become



a member of the Board of Guardians, as printer. If I am right, Funk was to be paid \$1000 for printing and mailing and Goerz was to receive \$300, or possibly \$500 for his work. As Goerz had the most work to do, his compensation was subsequently increased. Falk subscribed for several thousand copies to help cover the costs.

Someone may think that this arrangement was not quite above-board. But that is not true when one considers that the railroad companies always spend large sums to advertise their business and that they could, at that time, hardly have found a more promising venture than to win the favor of the large bodies of immigrants who were coming to America for their own reasons. At the same time this publication proved to be the means of giving the oncoming immigrants needed and useful information of all kinds.

The Board of Guardians met with the Aid Committee in Philadelphia on November 29, 1875, the former represented by A.D. (J.F.?) Funk, D. Goerz, H. Richert and me; the latter by Amos Herr, Baer, Schneck, and Francis Funk, agent of the Red Star Line and the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. The eastern brethren favored transporting the immigrants over the Red Star Line, and it was to promote this idea that the meeting was arranged. In the discussion it appeared that the easterners were a bit distrustful of us. So, for example, Bishop Herr asked what personal benefits we expected from our dealings with the Inman Line, and why we were unwilling to use the Red Star Line. I calmly replied that I received no personal benefit, I merely spent my time and money for the cause. They had perhaps learned of the publication of *Zur Heimat* and the generous subscription to it by the Inman Line, from which, to be sure, the printer and the editor derived some income, but I received nothing, though I had often to entertain transportation agents and Board members, sometimes for days.

Francis Funk put himself out to be most agreeable and took us aboard the ship, "Vaderland" where we were served an excellent meal. The outcome of our meeting was the establishment of the best possible cooperation between our two organizations; and the presentation to us by Funk of passes on the Pennsylvania mail system for such use as we could make of them.

From Philadelphia Goerz, Warkentin, and I went to New York where we called at the offices of the Inman Line. Nickerson and Abbott of the management received us very cordially, promised to continue the subscription to *Zur Heimat*, and issued passes to us. That did not please Francis Funk of the Red Star Line but it suited us until Mr. Falk of the Inman Line discovered that we had arranged for amicable relations with the Aid Committee and in a huff cancelled his company's subscription to *Zur Heimat*.

Our arrangements and their systematic application had a great influence on the course taken by the immigration of Mennonites from Europe. Large sums of money were collected and administered by the Board of Guardians, probably much larger than those of any other aid association; the most favorable transportation rates and treatment of immigrants were secured; the benefits of our contract, though intended primarily for our proteges, were extended to immigrants who could pay their own way; and we went so far as to extend our services and care

to immigrants from the moment they crossed the Russian border. Goerz, as secretary of the Board, carried on a huge correspondence; Warkentin was constantly traveling between the East and West in the interest of immigrants, sometimes acting as escort of parties; and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, whose generosity deserves to be recorded, in its own interests to be sure, gave us the almost continuous services of C. B. Schmidt as emissary, advisor, and escort, traveling extensively in this country and going even to Germany and Russia in our behalf.

No other aid association was able to match the advantages which the Board of Guardians could offer and it is easy to understand why, with the exception of the earlier immigrants in 1873 and the Berghthaler group that went to Canada, the later main stream of Mennonite immigration from Europe was almost wholly under the supervision and management of this Board.

The mass immigration of Mennonites from Europe occurred in 1874. Those of the large Alexanderwohl congregation in Russia, who determined to emigrate, divided themselves into two groups which made separate journeys to America, in both instances under our contract. Elder Jacob Buller headed the first contingent. He had Minnesota or Nebraska as his goal, and it was to Nebraska that he led his flock. They were not received there as he had expected and he lost no time in accepting the excellent proposition for settling in Kansas which was dispatched to him by Mr. Touzalin and C. B. Schmidt of the Santa Fe. His huge company selected the terrain about twenty miles north-east of Newton, and founded the New Alexanderwohl Church there. What they paid for land I do not recall, but it must have come to very little, considering the large amount of lumber and building materials given them by the Santa Fe, including the so-called "immigrant house," which was later used as a church.

The second contingent, under the leadership of Dietrich Gaeddert, also came in 1874. Our Board was notified of their leaving Russia and we expected them to come via Chicago. However, the Grand Trunk Railroad had upset all prior forwarding arrangements by its competitive bidding for immigrant traffic, and a new agreement was made to distribute the traffic equally among the competing lines. Under the new plan Gaeddert's company was conveyed over the Erie Railroad to Cincinnati, and from there via the Ohio-Mississippi Line to St. Louis. All of this information, including the time the travelers were to pass through Summerfield, was telegraphed to me from New York. It was harvest time and much fruit was ripe. The Summerfielder met the train and during its short stop streamed through the cars passing out food and fruit in quantity to the amazed and delighted tourists.

Several of us went with the party to St. Louis to act as interpreters. The company was to change trains there, and, watching Gaeddert, I saw his capacity to command. In the midst of all the excitement and confusion and inconsiderate behavior of some members of the party, he saw everything, issued his orders in few and calm words, and left his post only when the entire company had entrained on the Missouri Pacific; one of our contract carriers. My brother-in-law, D. C. Ruth, accompanied the travelers

to Kansas City where another change of trains was to be made. At some station on the way one of the passengers made a small purchase and left his purse with \$400—probably everything he owned—on the counter; and in spite of Ruth's efforts, it was not recovered.

When Gaeddert and his flock reached Topeka they were quartered, I believe, in the railroad shops of the Santa Fe, while Gaeddert himself and some of his leading men made a land hunting journey. It had been assumed that this second contingent would join the Alexanderwohl group near Goessel. But some of the brethren came quietly to the conclusion that this was not the best course to follow, and they selected lands about twenty-five miles to the west of the first group. There they founded the Hoffnungsau Church with Gaeddert as their elder.

In this vicinity there were considerable open tracts which were taken up by co-religionists who were not members of Gaeddert's congregation. Among these were the Mennonite Brethren under the leadership of A. Schellenberg.

In 1874 also there was founded the Hoffnungsfeld Church, consisting of Swiss Amish, who came from Russian Poland under the contract of the Board of Guardians. Jacob Stucky was their elder. As some of the land reserved by the Santa Fe for members of the Summerfield church had not been taken up, I secured Mr. Touzalin's permission to offer it to the Swiss Amish. That led to the establishment of the Hoffnungsfeld community between ours in Halstead and Gaeddert's. This congregation eventually split into the Hoffnungsfeld and the Eden churches. But before the break came Brother Gaeddert and I had many trying experiences in seeking to maintain unity.

Some of the needy members of these Swiss Amish had remained in eastern states where they could earn a livelihood among Mennonites residing there. A number of them working at Trenton, Ohio, decided to go west to Hoffnungsfeld and asked whether I could secure cheap transportation for them. Mr. Ford, general manager of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, had given me a bunch of tickets with the authority to hand them out free or for any price I might set, which of course I had to turn in to his company. I supplied the needed number of tickets from Cincinnati to Halstead at a nominal figure. I record this episode as an illustration showing that the Board of Guardians saved the immigrants a great deal of money.

A considerable number of these Swiss Mennonites from Russian Poland went to Dakota. They had hard going in their first years and were repeatedly aided by supplies sent from Kansas. Some of them gave up the struggle and, joining with members of the Hoffnungsfeld community, founded a settlement near Pretty Prairie, Kansas. All of them, including those remaining in Dakota, eventually made out very well.

Because Hoffnungsfeld was near Christian there was some shifting back and forth of members of these churches, and the church at Christian presently embraced many Polish Mennonites, who originally hailed from Switzerland, among them some Krehbiels whose ancestry, like mine, traces back to the Pfrimmerhof in the Palatinate.

The Bruderthal congregation was likewise founded in 1874 under the



leadership of Wilhelm Ewert. This man was very well-to-do and generous. He and his family arrived in Summerfield in 1874, accompanied by a number of Polish Mennonite families whose expenses he had probably paid. He picked a farm for himself near Hillsboro, Kansas, and proposed to buy 80 acres of land for each of the needy families he had brought with him, and make them a present of it. I advised him against it, believing that his generosity would not long be appreciated. I suggested he would do better to retain title to the land and rent it on very reasonable terms to his proteges who would make out on this plan just as well as on his. He took this advice, which the event proved sound when his followers joined neighboring churches.

The Gnadenau Church was founded in 1874 southwest of Hillsboro on the terrain that I had recommended to teacher Johannes Fast some time before, and which he had reserved for the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren. Their elder was Jacob Wiebe.

The Canton Church was founded in 1875 following tragic experiences which I shall try to relate. The members of this body came from Volhynia (Russian Poland) and were nearly all very poor and uneducated. (The Board of Guardians had no advance notice of their coming.) The Aid Committee of Pennsylvania paid their travel expenses from Europe and Francis Funk arranged for them to use his favored transportation lines on the sea and his preferred railroads in the east. He was however shrewd enough to pass the immigrants over to C. B. Schmidt of the Santa Fe for the last leg of the trip to Kansas. This huge company of immigrants, consisting of one hundred families with many children (Susanna Krehbiel's autobiography sets the number at 700), was dumped by the Santa Fe in Florence, Kansas, with only a store building for shelter in the middle of January, 1875; and the care of the wretched lot was put up to the Board of Guardians.

Warkentin was notified of the arrival of this multitude in Florence by C. B. Schmidt and hurried there. What he found led him to telegraph to Summerfield at once; "One hundred families without food; send money and men to help." That was like a bolt out of the blue. As Francis Funk had used his favorite transportation companies without any reference to our Board, these immigrants were truly a responsibility of the Aid Committee of the east. The Board of Guardians was not willing to drain its treasury, built up to carry out its own obligations, to meet this unforeseen though very real need. We realized that, if we lacked funds to assume the travel costs of needy future oncomers, Funk would exploit the Board's weakness to convey them over the lines he was working for.

Now since Schmidt, as agent of the Santa Fe had, without consulting us, accepted this company of immigrants, Goerz and I held that the Santa Fe must, for the present, supply them with food and shelter. Therefore we did not at first dip into the Board's funds, but we raised a substantial collection in Summerfield which Goerz and several others took to Kansas for distribution and to make an examination on the spot of the position of the poor souls in their mid-winter tragedy.

Meantime I wrote to Brother Baer—I forget his first name—in Pennsylvania strongly insisting that the Aid Committee owed it to these un-

fortunates to send the means to keep them from starving and freezing; adding that if they were not willing to do that, they should have held these immigrants in the East where they could have earned a living, as we in Summerfield did with needy arrivals. My correspondence with the Aid Committee did in the end have the desired result, and soon funds began to arrive from Pennsylvania.

In *Zur Heimat* Goerz depicted the plight of the people stranded in Florence. Collections were taken up everywhere in our churches and we were able to meet the most crying needs of the unfortunates without weakening the Board's treasury.

It was not enough to supply these people with food. A chance for the young people, of whom there were many, to earn something was needed at once. To that end I found work for twenty-four young folks in Summerfield and sent my brother-in-law, D. C. Ruth, to Florence to bring them to us at my expense. They were, to be sure, to repay me later and, parenthetically, most of them did. These persons were in such straits that we had even to supply them with clothing. Among them were Peter and Eva Bartel, and the Koehns who took service in my home. Once these people began to get wages, they felt they must first help their needy relatives in Florence and the repayment of my advances was thereby postponed. The example set by Summerfield was followed by other communities and served not only to meet a pressing need but also to teach the young new-comers American ways and conditions.

Steps to get these helpless immigrants onto the land and able to help themselves were of the first importance. During the winter I drew up the following plans, discussed them with my associates and, when the time was ripe, made them public.

*Plan 1.* The railroad company is to allot to each family so desiring, 40 acres of land and is to make no demand for payment for at least five years. Financial aid to families taking up 40 acres under this plan is to be given by the aid associations either in the form of outright gifts, or of loans where conditions warrant.

*Plan 2.* Any Summerfielder or other person who has bought land in, Kansas but has not yet occupied it, shall, if he can afford it, build a house on his land, take in one of the stranded families as tenants, supply the needed implements, cows and draft animals against a note, pay his tenant \$3.00 an acre for breaking the prairie, furnish seed for the first planting, permit the tenant to retain the entire first crop, and shall thereafter receive rent.

*Plan 3.* Anyone who already lives on his land or who plans to move onto it this spring (1875), shall, in addition to his own house, build another on his property for one of the needy families, shall supply it with food-stuffs which the family itself is to prepare for use; and in return this family shall work for him at an appropriate wage.

As its contribution to the execution of this program the railroad company is to lay down, freight prepaid in Halstead, one carload of building lumber for each family that is located under any one of these three plans. The benefit of this prepaid freight is to go to such families as settle on 40

acres under Plan 1; and to the owners of the land who take tenants under Plans 2 and 3, as an inducement to take the risks involved.

Raising money to finance this program, especially Plan 1, was a head-breaker. It was proposed that all branches of Mennonites in America be informed of the plight of their stranded co-religionists and urged to come to their aid, either with outright donations or with loans of money. The funds contributed were to be administered by a special body—the Kansas Aid Committee—representing both the Aid Committee and the Board of Guardians. This program met with general approval and was adopted.

To carry out this program it was necessary to win the agreement of the Railroad company. I had submitted the plan in writing to Mr. Touzalin but did not get his acceptance. Accordingly, I stopped in Topeka to see Mr. Touzalin on my way to Halstead in March, 1875, and had quite a battle to win his acceptance of our program. He was of course, glad to welcome settlers if they colonized a new region and was ready to agree to our program if the 40-acre allotments were made in the country about Pawnee Rock, Kansas. But after I pointed out that this was definitely frontier country, where the needy settlers could find no outside employment whatever to help themselves along, he finally agreed to my plan, which called for taking the 40-acre tracts in the vicinity of Canton, McPherson County. He also agreed to keep the matter confidential until I could secure the acceptance of the program by the people in Florence.

With these objectives attained I hopefully proceeded via Halstead, where, as noted, I organized the Mennonite Church, to Florence to see the brethren from Volhynia, Poland, and present our program for their release from their distress.

Based on reports I had heard, I pictured the situation of these unfortunates as being frightful enough; but what I found was ten times as bad as what I had imagined. The only indoor quarters of this multitude of about one hundred families with children, was a store about 80 by 30. It was a veritable pest hole. The doors and the few windows in the gables were kept closed, the center aisle was crowded with persons of all ages. Standing about, on either side of this center aisle lay sick and exhausted men, women, and children on straw sacks midst cooking and eating utensils. No fresh air! for like most Europeans they thought fresh air harmful. You can picture the conditions in this drafty hall, packed with human creatures, many of them sick, without proper ventilation in a pest-laden air charged with coal gas, meager food, little soap or water, no facilities for bodily cleanliness, no privacy—a terrible scene! It was fortunate that lack of space inside made it necessary that cooking and washing be done out of doors at the back of the store.

Though catering to the physical needs of these unfortunates was of the first importance, it was believed that serving their spiritual hunger would give them courage, and accordingly we held a church service at which I preached. We could not expect these people in their wretchedness to sing, so several preachers who were there led the singing, a gift I lack. The singing drew all who could get in, and attracted a group of Americans as onlookers. While preaching my lungs became so filled with noxious gases



that I opened a door. Someone immediately shut it. I stopped, opened the door again saying, "We must have fresh air if I am to speak and you are not all to perish in this foul haze." One of the invalids lifted himself from his straw pallet and called, "Thank you, dear brother, for once I get some fresh air." But even so the fresh air did not reach the middle of the room.

After the divine services the settlement program was presented to the gathering and was greeted with great enthusiasm. Anything to get out of this hole, was the sentiment. With their acceptance, we were in a position to put the program into effect.

The cultural status of this group was much lower than that of other Mennonite immigrants. After the meeting broke up parents and relatives crowded about me to inquire about those of their young people who had gone into service in Summerfield and elsewhere.

The first steps in the execution of the settlement plans for these people were taken by various persons who had previously taken up land in Kansas and who now built houses on them for tenants under either the rent plan (plan 2), or the hired-hand plan (plan 3).

A young pair, Peter and Eva Bartel, were among those who had come from Florence to Summerfield and were employed in my home. As they were willing and able workers, I built a house for them on my land in McPherson County, section 27, and furnished them with horses, wagon and other necessary equipment on credit. They were thus among the first to go to Kansas under the settlement program, and they served as a model for others. They lived on my land for five years and then went on their own.

To advance matters I soon went to Kansas again (1875) accompanied by Christian Hirschler. With the help of the people who were to occupy them, we hastily brought about the erection of a number of 12 by 14 foot houses and let the families move into them. These little houses were, to be sure, thin-walled and very drafty; but they were infinitely superior to the den in Florence where many had to remain until the Board could complete the arrangements to settle them on the 40-acre farms near Canton, McPherson County, which had been selected for them.

The projected Kansas Aid Committee was organized and included among others Christian Hirschler, David Holdemann, and David Goerz who was treasurer. Funds were supplied by the Aid Committee and the Board of Guardians. As much of the money contributed to these two committees was in the form of repayable loans, and as moneys were in turn advanced by the joint committee to settlers in the form of loans, Goerz had a colossal job in keeping track of these numerous transactions and later effecting collections from the scattered settlers and repayment to the original lenders.

In addition to financing, the work of the Kansas Aid Committee included providing building materials, regulating the free-freight arrangements so that each settler on 40 acres and others received their proper share of lumber, supervising the construction of houses, and supplying the needed equipment and draft animals. We had to buy mostly unbroken Texas oxen because few broken-in ones were to be had and were too high priced anyway. The colonists, who had mostly been weavers in Europe, had a lot of amusing experiences in making these animals tractable.

The backward status of these immigrants has been noted. Their progress was hampered by the fact that their leader, Tobias Unruh, left them and settled in a northern state. Thus the new community in Canton, which harbored enough suspicion and distrust in this new country as it was, became leaderless and uncontrolled. The aid committees had then to supply not only material goods but also spiritual guidance. Neighboring preachers, I among them, stepped into the breach, organized the Canton Church and took turns in filling the Sunday pulpit.

(There follow several pages relating to the later internal dissensions in the Canton Church, the activities of John Holdeman, the ensuing rifts and the weakening of the Canton congregation through the removal of members to other locations and the falling away of its young members. I omit the section as it does not relate to immigration. E. K.)

Several Mennonite communities were founded in Newton and vicinity by immigrants coming from Prussia, or Prussian Mennonites who had gone to Russia long before. Among these I mention the families of Leonhard, Abraham and Hermann Sudermann, and of Quiring and Rudolph Riesen. Leonhard Sudermann, as previously noted, was elder of the congregation in Berdiansk, Russia, and had been a member of the deputation in 1873. These families arrived in Summerfield in 1876 and spent the winter there. Several of them were preachers and during their stay preached the gospel to the spiritual blessing of the Summerfield congregation and of their fellow believers who were constantly passing through on their way from Europe to their new homes in America.

In the spring of 1877 the Sudermanns and Quirings moved to Kansas and some of them founded homes near Newton, others near Brainerd and Whitewater, Butler County. The first Newton Mennonite congregation was organized with Leonhard Sudermann as elder. Later, when Jacob Toews, coming from Khiva, was chosen as elder in Newton, Sudermann became the elder of the Emmaus Church in Butler County. Further considerable accretions of members, coming from West Prussia and settling about Newton, Emmaus, and Elbing, led to the formation of the Zion Church at Elbing in Butler County, with Cornelius and J. W. Regier as preachers.

The Gnadenberg congregation, likewise near Elbing, was made up of Polish Mennonites led by Johann Schroeder and later by Gerhard N. Harms.

Some time after the earlier and main migrations from Europe John Mueller came with a following of Mennonites from Galicia, Austria, whose ancestors had gone there from the Rhenish Palatinate and were thus offshoots of the South German Mennonites originally hailing from Switzerland. These arrivals were poor and had to go to work for hire in Harvey and McPherson counties to earn the means to buy lands. Eventually they settled near Hanston, Hodgeman County, Kansas. That region was for that time rather far to the west and proved to lack rain. It was years before these colonists prospered enough to buy their lands, and some became discouraged and went elsewhere. This small congregation had no minister of its own and had to be served by visiting preachers. Gaeddert and my brother Valentin often served; and I was called on to fill the pulpit frequently for several years.

The congregation at Beatrice, Nebraska, like that at Newton, was composed of Mennonites largely from Prussia, who objected to serving in the army and were prompted by the wave of immigration from Russia to follow the example of their fellow believers and seek new homes in America. The Beatrice community consisted of well-educated people and flourished under the able leadership of its elder, G. Penner.

The stream of Mennonite immigration from Europe in the Seventies did not limit itself to Kansas or Nebraska. Many larger and smaller groups settled in Minnesota, Dakota and Manitoba, and have since been constantly re-enforced by later accretions from Europe and Asia.

The wide dispersal of Mennonite immigrants from Europe into various American states and Canada, was a good thing. It was to be expected that they would rapidly multiply and, had they all settled in one colony, they could not have expanded as they have. Also had they all been established in one region their religious activities would have exercised less influence. Living to themselves in a closed community, they would have had fewer contacts with the outside world, their own horizons would have been narrower, and in consequence their influence on outsiders would have been the less. The outside world in turn, with its manifold superiorities and advantages in certain respects, might have exercised a repressive effect on them, not possible in their dispersion. And higher schools for advanced education and the missionary spirit would hardly have found the interest and support that they have enjoyed.

## THE LIFE OF CHRISTIAN KREHBIEL (1832-1909)

By H. P. Krehbiel

Christian Krehbiel was born on October 18, 1832, at Weierhof, a small village romantically located at the foot of the Donnersberg in the Palatinate, Germany. His parents, well-to-do farmers, were John and Katharine Krehbiel. The ancestry, like that of most Mennonites in southern Germany, traces back to Switzerland. Under pressure of persecution one Jost Krehbiel (Kraehenbuehel) left Switzerland about 1671 and settled in southern Germany. To him in the sixth generation Christian Krehbiel traces his descent. Beginning with his sixth year, he attended the good schools of that section until his eleventh year, when his parents removed to Einhoffen in Upper Bavaria, 25 miles from Munich. The school which he there attended for three years was very inferior. At fourteen attendance upon school ceased, except at a certain Sunday school, upon which attendance was required by law, until the seventeenth year. He was not a brilliant student at school. It was always hard for him to memorize, but that sort of exercise was then chiefly employed. But while literary training did not take so well with him, he nevertheless developed in mind by other educational influences. Chief among these were the educating conversations, which were carried on by the many visitors at the parental home, and to which he always was a most attentive listener. Religion, morals, travel, and practical affairs, all formed topics of conversation and discussion, and no doubt the scope of thought and the knowledge of affairs which later characterized the man,



trace their beginning to these early days of the then eagerly listening boy.

After having lived in Bavaria for seven years, a brother older than he, was drafted for military service. Being faithful adherents to the doctrine of non-resistance, the parents were anxious to shield their sons from military service. Accordingly they sold their farm at a great sacrifice, paid a thousand gulden for the release of their son from service, and in the spring of 1851, left the old homestead for America. A number of families immigrated together. The company made a temporary stop of nine months near Haysville, Ashland County, Ohio. During the summer of that year Christian Krehbiel worked on a farm. The place for ultimate settlement selected for the company was southeastern Iowa. To prepare somewhat for the coming of the families, Krehbiel, now nineteen years old, and another young man proceeded to Iowa in the fall of 1851. They went to Cincinnati, then a small village, there took passage on a steamboat and went down the Ohio River to Cairo, Illinois, then up the Mississippi to Keokuk, Iowa. It was during this trip that Krehbiel's independent activity began, when youth was changed to manhood.

The place of settlement in Iowa was Lee County. A few families of Mennonites had then already settled here. Upon his arrival Krehbiel hired out for a year to one of these at \$100. The following spring his parents and the rest of the company followed. During several years succeeding, Krehbiel was engaged in regular frontier work, cutting down the primeval forest and opening the soil to tillage. It was hard work, and life was plain in the simple loghouse they themselves had built. The great sacrifices made to get away from Europe, and to deliver the sons from military service had reduced the family to slender means. But his active mind, associated with others equally active, did not suffer, and religious interest was kept up by a rapidly growing and live church.

After six years he with his brothers had succeeded in clearing the homestead for the parents. All Krehbiel had earned up to this time had gone to his parents. Only now that the parents were provided for did he begin to look out for himself. On March 14, 1858, he was married to Susanna A. Ruth, daughter of the minister, David Ruth. For two years he now lived with his father-in-law. During the first year he was very sorely tried. He was taken with an eye trouble which necessitated his remaining in a dark room for several months, and for some time his sight was so poor that it was feared he would become permanently blind. The Lord, however, granted recovery, his eyes suffering but slight permanent impairment. It was about this time that a settlement was begun by Mennonites from South Germany at Summerfield, Illinois. Believing that section to have climatic and other advantages over Iowa, Krehbiel removed to that place in March, 1860. Here, as in Iowa, he followed farming as an occupation. During his nineteen years residence in that section he lived on four different farms. Beginning with almost nothing, by 1867 he, through industry, thrift and God's blessing had gained enough to own a nice farm, directly adjacent to the little village of Summerfield, on which he resided for twelve years.

Krehbiel's life was, however, not designed to run the quiet course of purely agricultural pursuit. In September, 1864, he was drafted to serve in the United States army. From this service he was personally relieved

by hiring a substitute. Two months later, the pastor of the church, Daniel Hege, having died, he was elected to the ministry. This gave a new direction to his life and opened the door to a most active and varied career. At the sessions of the General Conference held at Summerfield in 1863, he had already been a participant as a lay-member. It was at his suggestion that Ohio was selected as the place at which to locate the contemplated school of the Conference. By his election to the ministry he naturally came into more immediate relation to the General Conference. At the dedication services in 1866 of the Conference school at Wadsworth, he preached the first sermon with stirring effect.

The Western District Conference, which met for the first time in the Zion Church, Iowa, in October, 1868, was originated by Christian Krehbiel. For a number of years he served as home missionary of that body, and was always a leader in the work. As early as 1870 he had been in correspondence with European Mennonites who contemplated immigration to America. In 1872 four young men from Europe came to see him at Summerfield. Later other delegations came to consult with him, until he was in touch with all the leaders of the various immigrating churches, and Summerfield for several years became the first objective for Mennonite immigrants to this country; many families took up temporary residence there until they could make final selection for settlement. It was through him that the Mennonite Board of Guardians was originated, and he as president formulated its plans and directed its activity. Through this committee great savings were gained for the immigrants, much annoyance and hardship was averted, and many poor Mennonites, who would otherwise have been unable to come over, were enabled to come to this country.

In 1871 missionary interest had been greatly stimulated. S. S. Haury, student at the Conference school and member of Krehbiel's church, had announced his intention to become missionary. However, the expectation to carry on mission work through the Conference was almost defeated by Haury offering himself to the Amsterdam Mission Society. It was through Krehbiel that this was changed, that Haury offered himself as missionary to the Conference, and that the Conference entered upon an independent mission enterprise, to the good of the Conference itself and the blessing of the Indians. In 1872 the Conference entered upon its foreign mission endeavor. Krehbiel was elected a member of the Foreign Mission Board, and the Board in organizing elected him to the presidency, in which capacity he served for twenty-four years, planning and guiding the actual mission work as carried on in the field. Living close to the mission field he often visited it, and made it a point to be familiar with all its details.

In March, 1875, he had presided at the organization of the church at Halstead, Kansas; this church being an offspring of the church at Summerfield. In March, 1879, he removed with his family to this place and settled on a farm adjacent to the town. In the fall preceding, the church at Halstead, knowing of his intention to remove to this place, had elected him their pastor. He had assisted in the organization of the Kansas Conference in 1877, and residing now in this district he spent much of his time visiting among the churches and developing the spirit of co-operation. He was among those who promoted the plan of a school for Kansas, and when the Kansas

Conference decided to permanently carry on a school, it was through his influence that the Halstead church made her very liberal offer to furnish the buildings for the school. In connection with this school the Mission Board tried for two years to carry on an Indian industrial school. When it proved only partially successful, Krehbiel undertook to carry on this school himself, and accordingly established it on his farm in 1887, and conducted it until 1896. About one hundred and fifty different Indian children came under his personal influence and care during this time.

Forseeing that the United States Government was about to make such changes as would make the industrial school with the Indians impossible, he had in 1884 interested some others and organized the Mennonite Orphan Aid Society. Of this society he was president, and the institution was located at his home.

#### Supplement by Edward Krehbiel, added in 1949

After his sixty-fifth year Krehbiel's life moved into calmer waters. He traveled much less, though he continued to attend sessions of the General Conference. He frequently filled pulpits in churches in the neighborhood of Halstead, continued as head of the orphan institution located at his home, and was active as minister of the Halstead church to his death. In these later years he backed Dr. Arthur E. Hertzler, the "Horse and Buggy Doctor" in getting a hospital started in Halstead, experimented with orchard irrigation and improving farm methods, and devoted part of his time to writing his memoirs.

On January 30, 1909, he suffered a stroke, from which he speedily recovered. Some months later, on arriving home from a drive, a large barn door was hurled on him by a violent wind and he died of his injuries two days later, on April 30, 1909. Susanna Krehbiel, his wife, born April 22, 1840, passed away on April 19, 1920.



Christian Krehbiel place near Halstead, Kansas, with Krehbiel family.





Sketch of village street in Gnadenau, 1874.

# The Russian Mennonites and American Democracy under Grant

By

Leland Harder

After making several overtures to American diplomatic officers concerning the possibilities of migrating to the United States, the Mennonite and Hutterite colonies of Russia and Prussia sent twelve delegates to America in the Spring of 1873. They were to determine (1) whether good land at moderate prices could be obtained, (2) whether they would be assisted in the transportation to their new home, (3) what privileges they would receive in respect to military service, and (4) whether they could live in closed communities with private schools, local government, and the German language.<sup>1</sup> No single interest or idea determined the reaction of President Grant and the 43d Congress to the several petitions they received concerning these questions. On the contrary the attitudes were as varied as the men who participated in the discussions.

## *Objection to Giving the Mennonites Special Privileges*

Grant was in his second term, and his incompetency as President was becoming obvious. To his friends, said Henry Adams, "Grant appeared as an intermittent energy, immensely powerful when awake, but passive and plastic in repose . . . For stretches of time his mind seemed torpid . . . They could never measure his character or be sure when he would act. They could never follow a mental process in his thought. They were not sure that he did think."<sup>2</sup> Within the Republican party which elected him, the liberals were revolting and even talking of impeachment. Although a good soldier, in the office of chief executive Grant had become the "godfather to American corruption."<sup>3</sup> Such infamous affairs as the "Black Friday" incident, the "Credit Mobilier," and the odious "Whiskey Ring" characterized his administration. Even his cabinet contained men whose names were synonymous with dishonesty<sup>4</sup>—Williams, Belknap, Boutwell, and Secretary of the Interior Delano, an early friend of the Mennonite cause.

While most of the delegates were "Spying out the promised land,"<sup>5</sup> the Hutterite representatives Paul and Lorenz Tschetter, and the Mennonite elder Tobias Unruh, proceeded to Washington to discuss the military aspects with the President himself. Grant received the delegates in person on the 8th of August, 1873, after an introduction by M. L. Hiller of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The appointment had been granted at the request of Jay Cooke, New York banker and financier. The delegates had met Cooke in his office a few days before, and had been treated to "some very excellent wine," as Paul Tschetter wrote into his diary.<sup>6</sup> Cooke's exact interest in the Mennonite immigration is not evident, but he was a stockholder in virtually all the huge corporations of the time. While his name was linked with the corruption of the period,<sup>7</sup> he had contributed substantially to Grant's second

election campaign; and the President was duty bound to grant Cooke's request and hear the Mennonites.<sup>8</sup>

After reading the petition, Grant asked the delegates to have patience for a reply. Actually Grant gave the task to his Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, with the suggestion, "It may be proper to state to these people that it is entirely improbable that they will ever be called upon to perform involuntary military service."<sup>9</sup> Although Grant seemed to be willing to make concessions, Fish, who governed his department with extreme caution and conservatism, was reluctant to make promises of any kind. Since the delegates wanted to leave New York several days later, Jay Cooke attempted to expedite a reply from Fish, but was stalled until the latter could discuss the matter at greater length with the President, which he did in a letter dated August 13, 1873:<sup>10</sup>

My Dear General:

I beg your indulgence to allow me to explain my hesitancy in preparing the paper which is asked in reply to the memorial of the Russian Mennonites which was presented to you and by you referred to me with the endorsement.

They contemplate a colonization in large numbers in Minnesota and Dakota and allege their religious principles by reason of which they seek to avoid service after incidence of citizenship, and to obtain certain immunities.

They allege that some of their brethren already settled in this country were called upon during our late war to perform military service and could obtain exemption only by the payment of three hundred dollars.

They ask

I. For themselves and their brethren "exemption from military service for the next fifty years without payment of money for such exemption."

II. To keep their own schools and to administer them according to their own rules.

III. That it be optional with them to exercise the right of voting after being naturalized.

IV. They wish a written grant of these "Privileges" to show to their brethren on their return to Russia to "induce an immense emigration from that Country."

A letter accompanying the memorial contemplates the inducement by means of their "written grant" of the emigration of approximately 20,000 families from Russia alone.

These people say that if they emigrate they will have to sell their homesteads in Russia for a low price, spend almost all their money to make the long voyage and reach their destination, and that they seek assurance that if a war breaks out they shall not be called upon to pay any commutation for exemption from service.

It would be easy to answer them that there is no person in this country other than in Congress which can give them any assurance whatever of such exemption.

It is true that we hope that there may not be another war for the next fifty years. But should there be one there is little doubt that the exigencies of the war may make necessary a call for military service quite as extensive and as severe as occurred during the Revolution.



They propose to settle in Minnesota and in Dakota which will probably be a state within fifty years. The states regulate and control their militia organizations and determine who may be exempted. The states also regulate the common schools and provide exemptions from jury duty.

I fear that even the qualified and guarded answer which you propose should be given is one that circumstances may prove not capable of the certainty of realization and that should this large and interesting community be induced on the faith of a paper signed in your name to make the sacrifices which they picture with much feeling, of leaving their homes and their "cherished memories" and incur the large pecuniary loss which they must incur, and then within the fifty years of the future which no one can foreshadow find the necessities of a war calling upon them for commutations, and finding as they must find the state laws imposing military, jury duty, and interfering with their schools, they will imagine that the hope held out to them has proved delusive.

Pardon me, my dear General, for these suggestions, but I cannot see how any assurance such as these interesting people ask, can with any safety be given, and least of all in your name.

It may be said to them that their memorial will be laid before Congress which alone can promise exemption from military service in case of a war, and that the states within which they may settle alone can promise them exemption from military and jury duty and commit to them the conduct of their schools.

I suggest this for your consideration and shall delay answering their memorial until I hear from you in reply.

I am, my dear General, with great respect,

Your friend and obedient servant,

(Hamilton Fish)

In the meantime the Mennonite delegates who had detoured to Washington sailed for home with Hiller's assurance that the reply to their questions would be relayed, which reply was forthcoming on September 5, a month after the initial interview. Fish explained that jury duty, control of public schools, and militia service, were "exclusively subjects of State legislation;"<sup>11</sup> and that regarding national military service, the Mennonites could not be exempted from requirements placed upon other citizens.

Somewhat later, Fish forwarded a copy of the amended Civil War conscription act, which unlike the first made more liberal concessions to conscientious objectors;<sup>4</sup> and he marked for special reference the section on non-combatant service.<sup>12</sup> He included a brief note, and thought that this perhaps might be an acceptable substitute for the "written grant" so earnestly desired by the Mennonite delegates.

*Conciliatory Attitude toward Russia and the Desire to Maintain  
Peaceful International Relations.*

Of twenty-five different men in his cabinet during his tenure in office, Grant had succeeded in dismissing all but one, Secretary of State Fish. "To Fish must be ascribed responsibility not only for the signal achievements of the administration in the field of foreign affairs but also for preventing many egregious mistakes in domestic policies."<sup>13</sup> The relation between Fish

and Grant in the Mennonite affair was similar in many respects to an incident which preceded it by several years—namely, the Cuban affair. The Cuban rebellion against Spain, which broke out in 1868, found many staunch supporters within American borders, including Grant himself. United States recognition of the belligerency of the Cubans was demanded; and Grant summarily wrote to Fish, enclosing a signed proclamation to that effect. Realizing that war would have been the inevitable result, that the United States was sadly unprepared, and that it would have impaired the conclusion of a much more important negotiation with Great Britain, Fish quietly laid the proclamation aside, while Grant soon forgot about his blunder.

Fish had met the Mennonite question more than a year before Grant upon receipt of a similar Mennonite petition in the office of the United States Consul at Odessa in Russia. The letter was turned over to the United States Minister of St. Petersburg, who immediately dispatched Secretary Fish about the matter. The Minister informed Fish that the Mennonites were "intelligent, industrious and persevering and in addition very clean, orderly, moral, temperate and economical,"<sup>14</sup> and he advised the Consulate Officer to make a temporary reply to the Mennonites to the effect that the Northern Pacific Railroad (with which Jay Cooke and Hiller were affiliated) had good cheap land on long credit, and would assist in emigrating at reduced rates, and that compulsory military service did not exist in the United States.<sup>15</sup> Hamilton Fish, undoubtedly fearing a possible breach in relations with Russia, ordered that "As Russian law forbids emigration or its encouragement, it would not be advisable for this government to interfere in the matter until the position of that government which you proposed to ascertain shall be known. It is not probable, however, that Congress would be disposed to make the case of the Mennonites an exception by granting them money or lands towards inducing them to emigrate or compensating them therefore."<sup>16</sup> Fish obviously had every intention of continuing undisturbed what Grant termed "the intimate friendly relations which have so long existed between the United States and Russia . . ."<sup>17</sup> The Minister to Russia, after he had received the warning of his superior, hastened to reply that he "declined to take any steps in the matter and shall continue to decline, unless I receive direct orders from you."<sup>18</sup> Quick to approve the new approach, Fish dispatched his "commendation of the reserve"<sup>19</sup> maintained by his subordinate in regard to the subject.

#### *Desire to Obtain High Class of Immigrants, Good Farmers.*

Hamilton Fish's modification of Grant's memorandum upon the Mennonite petition did not deter the President from inviting the next Congress to look favorably to the possibility of obtaining "an industrious, intelligent and wealthy people, desirous of enjoying civil and religious liberty."<sup>20</sup> He considered that the acquisition of so large an immigration of citizens of a superior class would be a substantial accession to the country. He had in fact received a second Mennonite visitation after receipt of the suggestions from Fish; and his caller, in the person of Cornelius Jansen, who had been forced to flee Russia for his emigration activities, made no less an impression than his brethren. The interview was decidedly more satisfactory inasmuch as Jansen, who was much at home in distinguished circles, could speak English.

And if Grant was impressed, Jansen was amazed to find the American chief executive a simple man who in his younger days had been in the habit of milking twenty cows morning and evening. "In Russia," wrote Peter Jansen, his son, who accompanied him, "we associated a government official with a uniform and lots of lace and trimmings, and the higher ones would always have guards of soldiers at the entrances of their quarters and residences. Imagine our surprise when we reached the "White House" to find the portals guarded by a single colored man who not even displayed a sword." <sup>21</sup> Jansen's visit revived Grant's interest in the Mennonites; and this time he sent for his Interior Secretary, Columbus Delano, from whom he undoubtedly hoped to get more support. Delano, "who was all pliability," <sup>21a</sup> included his concurrence in the subsequent Interior Department report; and Grant hastened to use it in his message to Congress.

Even though the Federal Government could not promise perpetual military exemption, entire colonies of Russian Mennonites had decided to emigrate and were making the necessary arrangements. They learned that they could obtain inexpensive land from any one of the several large railroad companies. But they still insisted on remaining together as colonies in their new home; and the land grants to the railroads had been made in alternate sections only. This would not give them the one large piece of land they needed. They would still have to obtain from the government the land in between the railroad grants, and to have that assurance before they left required a special act of Congress. As Delano explained it in his departmental report, in order to enable the Mennonites to obtain one large piece of land for their needs, "some concessions must necessarily be made from the present requirements of the land laws."<sup>22</sup> He suggested that the Secretary of the Interior be authorized to withdraw from sale or entry such lands as the Mennonites may desire to occupy.

Considering Delano's connection with the Whiskey Ring affair and several land frauds, it would be easy to be suspicious of his interest in the Mennonite immigration. Delano's department had long been working "hand in glove with land speculators,"<sup>23</sup> and his own Assistant-Secretary had described the department "rotten from top to bottom."<sup>24</sup> An oldtime Ohio criminal lawyer, Delano had a "sly, contriving air . . . His appointment marked a sad step in the deliquescence of the Administration, and Fish mourned it." The Mennonites, continued Delano, "may not desire to locate in one colony, but would prefer the selection of two or more colonies or locations. It would be well, therefore, to confer such discretion on the Secretary of the Interior as would enable him to meet their views in that regard. The entire area they will probably require will be about 500,000 acres."<sup>25</sup>

The matter was taken up officially in the United States Senate on January 12, 1874, with the reception of a petition signed by Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania in behalf of the Mennonites. Born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, of German and Scotch ancestry, Cameron knew the Mennonites of his state, and calls them the "best farmers we have in Pennsylvania."<sup>26</sup> The petition was referred to the appropriate committee which, with the help of the General Land Office, designed a bill to give the Mennonites the land needed to maintain compact communities.

The House of Representatives had received similar petitions and bills,



which were subsequently "pigeon-holed" for lack of time and support. These petitions were submitted, after the Mennonite delegates had returned, by John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana, and Amos Herr of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania—in whose hands completion of the immigration plans had been left. Also working in behalf of favorable legislation was Cornelius Jansen, who visited men whose influence could be used. In his speech before the Senate, Cameron of Pennsylvania mentions having been visited by a Mr. Johnson, evidently meaning Jansen.

It is a source of interest to know that the first and foremost argument on behalf of the Mennonite cause was not their plight in a far-off land, but, as one Senator stated, "the opportunity which this country has of acquiring a large and very valuable body of emigrants." <sup>27</sup> This he called an exceptional opportunity, and warned of the possibility of losing this immigration unless the measure was passed. The same sentiment was earlier expressed by Senator Windom from Minnesota, who reported the bill from the committee, and remained to the end its champion. Speaking of the Mennonites he said, "They prefer our country, and unless we choose to drive away forty thousand of the very best farmers of Russia who are now competing with us in the markets of the world with some ten million bushels of their wheat, if we choose to say that Russia shall raise that wheat or that Canada shall provide it instead of our own country, we can simply reject the proffer of these people, and they probably will not become our citizens. I deem it of the utmost importance that this bill should pass."<sup>28</sup>

#### *Opposition to the Closed Community and the Autonomous Mennonite Culture*

The structure of Senate Bill No. 655, "to enable the Mennonites from Russia to effect permanent settlement on the public lands of the United States," provided that the Mennonites, while still in Russia, could work through a delegated authority who would make application with the Secretary of the Interior, listing the people represented, and the quantity of land up to 160 acres desired by each. The Mennonite agent would then receive a certificate which would authorize him to select land in any land district of the nation by registering with the respective district clerk, who would in turn return the certificate to the central land office.

After the reading of the bill, it soon became clear that the contest would not be restricted to the single question of granting land in return for a high class of settlers. Extremely unfortunate for the Mennonites was the fact that their first opposition came from the ablest constitutional lawyer in Congress, George F. Edmunds of Vermont, who brought up a more far-reaching aspect of the bill—the closed community. Edmunds, although a staunch Republican and close friend of Grant, was independent of any political obligations; and consequently was highly respected by all.<sup>29</sup> A pioneer of government control of railroads, he was not only respected but often feared. He had a profound contempt for hypocrisy and humbug and a tongue which on occasion could blister opponents like sulphuric acid . . . . One of them once remarked that if led blindfolded into the Senate chamber he could tell at once, from the nature of the business under discussion, whether or not

Edmunds was in his seat. When he was absent the members usually tried to rush through the petty jobbery which they were reluctant to submit to his keen scrutiny and merciless sarcasm."<sup>30</sup> To him the Mennonite question was "entirely independent of what these people think, upon any religious or political or social topic. It is the question," he continued, "which . . . is fundamental to successful republicanism, that of a homogeneous unity of the whole body of the citizens of a State divided into political parties, divided into sects, divided into social grades, if you please, but all in the body of the community living as friends and neighbors among each other, and not separated by any territorial or other distinctions from each other."<sup>31</sup> Edmunds was arguing a theory, more recently propounded, that successful nationalism depends upon fundamental affinities of language and culture.<sup>32</sup> He always debated a question in a clear, half-conversational manner, occasionally indulging in a dash of sarcasm which made those Senators who were the objects of it wince.<sup>33</sup>

"However tempting, therefore, Mr. President," Edmunds concluded "this opportunity to get fifty thousand workers and wheat-raisers and wool growers . . . yet I say we should not be tempted by any temporary or pecuniary advantage to depart from what I believe to be, as I have said, a fundamental principle in the progress and security of our republican government. Let us have no exclusions; let us know no boundaries; let us be a nation and a people where every man everywhere stands on an equality with his fellow-man, where there are no boundaries like Chinese walls to separate one sect or one opinion of politics or one calling from another; but an equal citizenship and an equal freedom."<sup>34</sup>

Just before this blow had fallen, Windom had attempted to belittle the objection of the closed community by stating: "It is not the intention of these people to come in one body and take possession of large tracts of land, as has been supposed. They pursue different avocations at home. Some of them are farmers; some of them are wool-growers; others are engaged in manufacture and the various pursuits which made a rich and prosperous community. It is possible that the farmers will go to the Northwest; that the wheat-raisers will find in Minnesota or Dakota or Nebraska, or that region of country, the best place for their pursuits, while the wool-growers will probably go farther South, and so throughout the country they will be distributed in small bodies in what I deem an entirely unobjectionable manner."<sup>35</sup> But this did not deter Edmund's admonition, for he realized very well that the bill made possible the acquisition of 500,000 acres of railroad land in alternate sections, and the 500,000 "in-between" acres from the government. And he foresaw further the possibility of the establishment of a huge and much too autocratic foreign community within the nation. His objection was shared by other senators, including Carpenter of Wisconsin and Sargent of California.

Windom was far from defeated by Edmunds, and he pursued the debate. Although a firm supporter of homestead legislation and a liberal policy toward railroads, "no scandal ever attached to his name in a period when too many of his contemporaries had to defend reputations not altogether invulnerable."<sup>36</sup> He explained in the common-sense manner, which later earned for him the position of Secretary of the Treasury under Garfield

and Hayes, that the Mennonites could not obtain more than 500,000 acres of land, and that no one agent could register for more than 100,000 acres. The immigrants provided for by one agent could not thus acquire more than 100,000 acres in any one place, enough land to accommodate but sixty-two families. "There is absolutely nothing in this bill except authority for these people to come and make selections of land in order to enable them to send over their sons or members of their families before the main body comes, in order to take possession of those lands, build houses upon their quarter sections, and prepare for the bulk of the body when they can get rid of their lands at home and be able to come here and take possession. When they come they are under all the laws that govern American citizens, and subject to every duty, as I have two or three times said, that belongs to an American citizen."<sup>37</sup>

### *The Mennonites Should Help Defend Our Common Country.*

Before the Mennonite petition introduced by Cameron of Pennsylvania had been read in the Senate, Orris Ferry of Connecticut objected to its reception on a technicality. These people were subjects of a foreign power, and the rules of the Senate prohibited the reception of such a petition if there was any objection from the floor. The solution was suggested by the celebrated orator from Massachusetts, Charles Sumner, who was not disposed to allow a just bill to be disposed of in so petty a fashion. And so, Cameron, as an American citizen, signed his own name to the petition, and it was received in that fashion.

Orris Sanford Ferry, a Brigadier General in the Civil War, had often alienated other members of his own party by his methods and conduct in the Senate.<sup>38</sup> Physically disabled,<sup>39</sup> Ferry, in relation to the Mennonite question, was chiefly concerned about their draftability and liability to assist in the defense of the common country. Having read in an encyclopedia that the Mennonites refused to carry arms, he was from the beginning opposed to their coming if they were to be given any privilege in this respect. "Mr. President," he interposed in the course of subsequent debate, "the real point in this bill has not been touched. The Mennonites' difficulty with the Russian Government consists simply in this: They, in their religious tenets, are opposed to war, and refuse to enter the military service of a great military power. They desire to emigrate somewhere where they will be free from the obligation of defending by physical force the nationality of which they are members, and this bill is so drawn that the Mennonites who come to this country under it may take up these lands and hold them indefinitely, without ever becoming citizens of the United States, and therefore without ever becoming liable to compulsory military service if the Government of the United States should be compelled to call upon them in time of war."<sup>40</sup>

Roscoe Conkling, who for his great abilities had been offered the Chief Justiceship by Grant, rose to dispute Ferry's prejudiced statement, and suggested to him that he had not given a true picture of the situation in Russia. He stated that Catherine of Russia had previously granted the Mennonites complete military exemption upon their immigration into her



country, and that inasmuch as they were suddenly required to perform duty, they had a more substantial objection than Ferry had stated. To which Ferry repeated his intention to vote in the negative unless the Mennonites were required to participate in the "defense of our common country."<sup>41</sup>

Roscoe Conkling, exceedingly popular with Grant and the Republican liberals, had the finest torso in public life. It was a common fact, and occasionally embarrassing to other more socially inclined members, that Conkling never touched liquor of any kind.<sup>42</sup> The undisputed leader of the state of New York, he was a tolerant and liberal thinker. Ferry's arguments against the Mennonites continued to disturb him, and he took an opportunity upon another occasion to disprove them from a different standpoint. Reviewing the latest legal interpretations of the concept of expatriation, Conkling asserted that when an individual comes from a foreign country to remain in the United States, and declares his intention of becoming a citizen thereof, he is subject to call in case of an emergency the same as if he were an actual citizen.

Perhaps the best answer to Ferry's objection came from Thomas W. Tipton of Nebraska, who said, ". . . in God's name, have we not enough of the fighting element in America? Look to Arkansas today, where the people are never happy unless they are in a fight (laughter). Our people are a peculiar people; and if there is any portion of the world that can send us a few advocates of peace, in God's name let us bid them welcome. We want settlers of that kind."<sup>43</sup>

#### *Objection to Monopolizing the Land, Possibility of Fraud.*

The United States Senate of the Forty-third Congress contained a Republican majority, and all but one of the senators who participated in the discussion of the Mennonite bill were Republicans. The lone Democrat, who as James G. Blaine affirmed, was entitled to be considered the foremost man of his party in the nation,<sup>44</sup> was Allen G. Thurman of Ohio. Elected to the Senate in a predominately Republican state, Democrat Thurman "was a disciplined debater, was fair in his method of statement, logical in his argument, honest in his conclusions."<sup>45</sup>

After attempting to show that the amount of good agricultural land belonging to the United States, and not covered by pre-emption or homestead applications or granted away to railroads, was very small, contrary to public opinion, Thurman asserted that "it would be a very bad policy in us to open the door to the absorption and monopoly of these lands in the manner that I fear would follow from the passage of this bill . . . Do not let somebody coming in here professing to be an agent, today of the Mennonites, tomorrow of some other sect, the third day of another sect, go around and monopolize in large tracts and take out of the market vast bodies of land to the extent of 100,000, 200,000, 500,000 acres.

"I think that I can see that if this policy be adopted it will open a door to the most outrageous frauds. I think it is very easy, if this thing is to be done, for sharp and designing men . . . to come here representing themselves as entitled to represent large bodies of immigrants coming to

this country and asking the passage of precisely similar bills; and how are you to refuse them? Are you going to refuse them upon the ground that their sect of religion is not as good as the Mennonites, or that you do not quite agree with their sentiments in morals or politics or something else? I think that any policy which tends to monopolize those lands in large tracts is not advantageous to the people of the country, nor to the immigrants to the country, and is against the best interest of the Government."<sup>46</sup>

Justice Smith Morrill, author of the famed Morrill Land Act, which subsidized state agricultural colleges through public lands, was impressed with Thurman's explanation of the possibility of speculation on the Mennonite land; and he announced that at the proper time he would submit an amendment to the effect that reserved land actually not settled by those for whom intended shall again become open to pre-emption or sale in the same manner as other public land. He hoped that in this way one of the weaknesses suggested by Thurman, would be alleviated.

### *Objections and Amendments to the Mennonite Bill.*

Discussion upon the Mennonite bill was not part of the regular calendar business of the Senate. It was rather conducted in the morning hour, the expiration of which it often exceeded by unanimous consent. Since time was difficult to find and so much unfinished business was pending, the weighty amendments to the bill, which were often highly technical and required much attention, greatly diminished its chances for success.

Hannibal Hamlin, Lincoln's first Vice-President, was the first to suggest a change. He argued that the bill would enable the Mennonites to hold land indefinitely without becoming naturalized citizens of the United States. A man of shrewd, common sense, Hamlin had the gift of stating things in clear and understandable phrase.<sup>47</sup> He liked to see a bill worded so that it was free from future difficulties and discrepancies. Windom explained again that the bill required the people to take land under the existing laws, which required a declaration of intention to become citizens. Hamlin was not altogether satisfied because a simple declaration of intention didn't make naturalization within any certain time compulsory. But he let the matter drop, preferring that the Senator in charge should amend his own bill.

A more sweeping amendment was offered by Stewart of Nevada, a wealthy lawyer of Gold Rush days. Stewart, who at one time had received up to \$500,000 in fees for the defense of a single gold mine,<sup>48</sup> wanted to strike out seven of the nine sections of the bill in the belief that they were unnecessary. "I do not believe," he argued, "in passing laws for the administration of that office (General Land Office) which shall add one additional item to the present machinery where it is not necessary, where the law is plain to all the world and well understood."<sup>49</sup> Stewart made a far-reaching substitution for the sections he omitted: the agent for the Mennonites would select a township of land (rather than 100,000 acres), which would make room for 144 families (instead of 62 families); and another township could then not be reserved until the first was settled.

Windom strongly opposed the amendment, and took expensive time to point out its weaknesses, for he believed it defeated the purpose of the bill. In the first place, it forced 144 families to live in a closed community,

which was the initial and still the strongest objection to the bill. And in the second place, no other application could be made until one entire township was taken; and even then, two years must elapse before such application.

Stewart, one of those individuals of "unlimited self-confidence and colossal self-assertion,"<sup>50</sup> dominated all but the heel of another morning hour with an objection to allowing the Mennonites to obtain land through agents. For this, he claimed, there was no necessity. "If the lands are held open in a body, these Mennonites can go to them and select them themselves and do it in their own names when they get here. It involves complications which will be inconsistent with the section which follows for throwing them open to settlement in case they are not taken. It is unnecessary machinery. There is a good deal of clerical work and expense in executing the law whereas there need not be a cent of expense in executing the law if they simply file a certificate setting aside for a limited period of time a quantity of land for them to settle upon and then let them settle upon it just as other settlers do."<sup>51</sup> Becoming increasingly frustrated, Windom reminded Stewart that as a member of the committee which reported the bill, he should have been present to state his objections at that more convenient and appropriate time. But Stewart insisted, "The simple point is that I do not want to have the lands located by an agent until the parties themselves get here. It is unnecessary machinery, and it is all an innovation on the present system."<sup>52</sup>

The axe which Windom feared fell with the next statement by Senator Carpenter, who was more interested in another piece of legislation at hand: "It is manifest that this bill has got to be considerably debated before it can pass, and I call for the regular order."<sup>53</sup>

The next amendment was made by Windom and the Committee itself. To diminish the objection of the closed community, it changed from 500,000 to 300,000, the maximum number of acres that could be obtained by the Mennonites. And this amendment was subsequently passed.

A fourth amendment was suggested by Windom's colleague from Minnesota, Alexander Ramsey, who was aware of a fact not generally known, that some of the land along the Minnesota River which had been inspected and approved by the Mennonite delegates, was held at a price slightly above the \$1.20 minimum and therefore, under the present bill, would not be open to Mennonite settlement. Ramsey proposed to strike out the provision that the Mennonites could obtain only that land held at the minimum price. And his amendment was likewise approved.

The logical order of business then reverted to the indiscriminate amendment of the senator from Nevada, who again initiated a wrangle by a modification of his original proposal. And again came the inevitable axe, this time lowered by John Stockton of New Jersey, who said: "It is manifest now that we are to have a great deal of discussion in reference to the bill which has been before the Senate this morning. The gentlemen in charge of it suggests that the Louisiana bill be laid aside until this bill be finished. If their impression is that such a bill as this is going to be finished while another bill is laid aside informally, I think they are very much mistaken. I look upon this bill as a very bad one, a very dangerous one, and one with-



out precedent; and as it must lead to considerable debate, it would not be right, I think, to ask that we lay aside the unfinished business informally, as if it were understood that the present bill would soon be finished. I think it cannot be finished today, nor in many days."<sup>54</sup>

#### *Other Factors Opposing Passage of the Mennonite Bill*

The bill to assist the Mennonites in their immigration failed to come to a vote. The outcome, should it have done so, one can only surmise. Those who participated in the discussion were equally divided on both sides of the question, and it must be said that most of the participants were leaders in politics and parliamentary debate.

Besides the objections registered in the course of the Congressional debates, there are perhaps several incidental factors which worked against passage of the measure. First, the Mennonite cause suffered from too much publicity. They desired only one thing from Congress: the withdrawal of certain public lands until they could appear to claim them. The previous demands of the delegates and the wording of the memorial before the Senate resulted in the infusion of questions quite irrelevant to the bill. The warning of Hiller was not far amiss when he reproved J. F. Funk for submitting the petition to Congress in the first place, which, he feared, "will give the matter too much publicity, and may endanger the whole scheme."<sup>55</sup>

Second, the railroads undoubtedly contributed "back-of-the-scene" influences, the exact nature of which are difficult to ascertain. It was a factor suggested by the Pennsylvania Mennonite Minister, Amos Herr, in a letter to Cornelius Jansen. "Our mission to Washington," he wrote, "I have lost faith in. The railroad companies would have no chance to speculate on our people with their lands if that bill passed."<sup>56</sup> Senator Windom, under whose guidance the bill made the progress it did, was a stockholder in the Northern Pacific Railroad, as was also Jay Cooke, the New York banker. Since this particular railroad stood to gain the most upon success of the bill, its influence might easily be underestimated. The Santa Fe and other railroads would not have been so favorable, since their lands were not under consideration.

A third possible factor was the friction within Grant's administration, which caused an actual revolt of the Liberal Republicans. Some of the Republicans who opposed the Mennonite bill had been participants in the revolt; and the movement was characterized by prejudiced opposition to anything suggested by Grant, rather than of positive reform.<sup>57</sup> Several were suspicious of the bill for possible speculation and fraud, and were perhaps embittered at the growing corruption within the Grant administration, the full measure of which was as yet unknown.

In spite of these varied attitudes and reactions of Grant, his Cabinet, and the Forty-third Congress, towards the Mennonites, nothing could hold those who had once decided to move; and within a year the migration was in full swing.

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1. C. Henry Smith, *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites*. (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1927), p. 58.

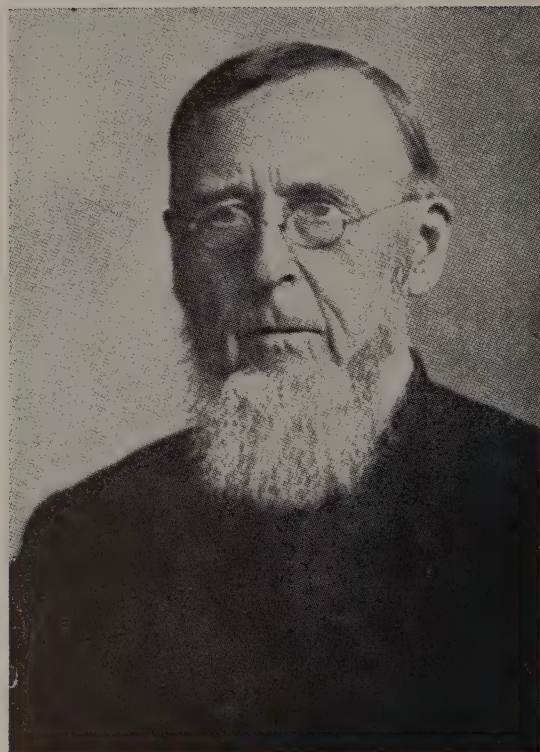
2. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927), p. 264.

3. E. Strachey, "Godfather to American Corruption," *American Mercury*. (June, 1934), pp. 170-9.
4. Samuel Eliot Morison and Commager, Henry Steele, *The Growth of the American Republic*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 59.
5. C. Henry Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-76.
6. "The Diary of Paul Tschetter, 1873," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. (July, 1931), p. 215.
7. Allan Nevins, *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration*. (New York: Dodd, Meade & Company, 1937), p. 592.
8. Less than two months later, on September 17, Cooke's Company went broke, and the failure initiated the financial panic of 1873. Also interesting is the fact that Grant had been Cooke's guest at his palatial home near Philadelphia, the night before. See, Allan Nevins, *op. cit.*, p. 695.
9. Ernst Correll, "President Grant and the Mennonite Immigration from Russia," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. (July, 1935), pp. 146-7.
10. Hamilton Fish to Ulysses S. Grant, August 13, 1873. A photostatic copy of the original is filed in the Bethel College Historical Library, North Newton, Kansas. Unknown to Leibbrandt or Correll, this document presents a more complete picture of the relation between Fish and Grant upon the subject than heretofore possible.
11. Ernst Correll, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-9. See also, Gertrude S. Young, "A Record Concerning Mennonite Immigration, 1873," *The American Historical Review*. (April, 1924), pp. 521-2.
12. This document is owned by the Bethel College Historical Library, North Newton, Kansas.
13. Morrison and Commager, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
14. Georg Leibbrandt, "The Emigration of the German Mennonites from Russia to the United States and Canada in 1873-1880: I," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. (October, 1932), pp. 224-5.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-6.
17. "Third Annual Message of Ulysses S. Grant, December 4, 1871," *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. VI, edited by James D. Richardson. p. 4099.
18. Georg Leibbrandt, *op. cit.*, p. 226.
19. *Loc. cit.*
20. "Fifth Annual Message of Ulysses S. Grant, December 1, 1873," *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. VI, p. 4207.
21. Peter Jansen, *Memoirs of Peter Jansen*. (Published by the author, 1921), p. 35.
- 21a. Allan Nevins, *op. cit.*, p. 467.
22. Ernst Correll, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-50.
23. Morrison and Commager, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
24. Allan Nevins, *op. cit.*, pp. 467, 764.
25. Ernst Correll, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
26. "The Congressional Debates on the Mennonite Immigration from Russia, 1873-74," edited by Ernst Correll, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. (July, 1946), p. 180.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
29. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. VI, edited by Allen Johnson. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), pp. 24-7.
30. *Loc. cit.*
31. "The Congressional Debates—," *op. cit.*, pp. 185-6.
32. For a recent discussion and disputation of this theory of nationalism, see Walter Lippmann, *The Good Society*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1938), p. 132.
33. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. VI, p. 26.
34. "The Congressional Debates—," *op. cit.*, p. 187.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

36. **Dictionary of American Biography**, Vol. XX, pp. 383-4.
37. "The Congressional Debates—," **op. cit.**, p. 191.
38. **Dictionary of American Biography**, Vol. VI, pp. 342-3.
39. James G Blaine, **Twenty Years of Congress**, Vol. II. (Norwich, Connecticut: The Henry Hill Publishing Company, 1886), p. 287.
40. "The Congressional Debates—," **op. cit.**, p. 192.
41. **Loc. cit.**
42. **Dictionary of American Biography**, Vol. IV, pp. 346-7.
43. "The Congressional Debates—," **op. cit.**, pp. 219-20.
44. James G. Blaine, **op. cit.**, p. 442.
45. **Loc. cit.**
46. "The Congressional Debates—," **op. cit.**, p. 215.
47. **Dictionary of American Biography**, Vol. VIII, pp. 196-9.
48. **Ibid.**, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 13-15.
49. "The Congressional Debates—," **op. cit.**, p. 202.
50. **Dictionary of American Biography**, Vol. XXVIII, p. 14.
51. "The Congressional Debates—," **op. cit.**, p. 201
52. **Ibid.**, p. 203.
53. **Loc. cit.**
54. **Ibid.**, p. 212.
55. C. Henry Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 80.
56. **Ibid.**, p. 82.
57. Morrison and Commager, **op. cit.**, p. 70.







JOHN F. FUNK

(1835-1930)

# John F. Funk and The Mennonite Migrations

of 1873—1885

By Kempes Schnell

Important changes took place in some of the Mennonite congregations of America during the last half of the nineteenth century. Activities like evangelism, missions, Sunday school work and education were introduced. John F. Funk (1835-1930), who was born in Pennsylvania, was one of the most effective promoters of these courses. His interests included also contacts with European Mennonites, especially with those contemplating migration to America.

As the editor of *Der Herold der Wahrheit* and its English counterpart, *The Herald of Truth*, he was in an especially favorable position to disseminate information about the plight of the Mennonites in Russia during the 1870's and to aid the immigrants upon their arrival in this country. Through his publication activity, Funk kept in touch with the European publications of the Mennonites. He learned of the dissatisfaction of the Prussian Mennonites with Bismarck's newly instituted military laws through an article in the *Mennonitische Blaetter* of February 1870. His interest was aroused by a statement that some of these people would prefer emigration to acceptance of these laws. Funk appeared to favor such a proceeding and in an editorial in the *Herald of Truth* he suggested that a deputation from these brethren may come to the United States that summer to investigate settlement possibilities and urged an interest on the part of the American Mennonites.<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of the same year a call for help was noticed by Funk in an article in the *Gemeindeblatt* which mentioned the suffering of the Alsatian Mennonites caused by the savages of the Franco-Prussian War of that same year.<sup>2</sup> As a result of that article over \$500 was raised and sent to the war sufferers in Alsace.<sup>3</sup>

During these same years Funk was corresponding with members of the group of dissatisfied Mennonites in Russia. These people were also concerned because of their government's attempt to nationalize and militarize the people within its borders. While the Russian Mennonite leaders were attempting to secure exemption from universal military service which faced their young men in 1871 by petitioning their government, Cornelius Jansen, grain merchant and earlier Prussian consul at Berdiansk, in South Russia, became convinced that the only way out was to emigrate to America. Accordingly he opened a correspondence with American brethren. He had become acquainted with Funk through reading the *Herold der Wahrheit*. In this correspondence which continued through 1872, Funk presented Jansen with the desired information concerning the resources and industries of the different sections of the United States, the customs of the people and the laws governing military service.<sup>4</sup>

When agencies of the American governments and railroads heard of the possibility of the immigration of these thrifty and industrious people,

they all manifested an interest, and by 1872 much activity was concentrated on the furtherance of this movement. Although most of the Russian brethren still hoped that they could persuade the Russian Government to exempt them from the impending laws others investigated migration possibilities. On January, 1872, Leonhard Sudermann, of Berdiansk, presented a petition to the British consul in which inquiries were made concerning emigration.<sup>5</sup> Similar petitions followed from other colonies. In this same summer a Canadian Government land agent, Wm. Hespeler, arrived in Russia and traveled throughout the Mennonite communities distributing information which advertised his country as the land for settlement. The United States expressed her interest by distributing information concerning her policy on military laws and on the price of frontier land through her Ambassador, E. Schuyler.<sup>6</sup>

Funk exhibited his usual practical caution and withheld this story in the *Herald of Truth* until June, 1872, when he reprinted an article from one of the Chicago dailies which accurately portrayed the situation and concluded with a favorable comment concerning the possible movement.<sup>7</sup> His first public mention of his correspondence with Jansen was printed in the July issue of the same year. In an editorial he states that the matter of an emigration had been considered in Russia and that, "it is possible that some of the people may migrate before a great while," but that any immigration to this country in a body is doubtful. However, he concluded by pleading for a maintenance of an active interest on the part of his readers for their "Brethren on the other side of the great water."<sup>8</sup>

After this he attempted to keep the facts of the Russian situation before his readers. In each succeeding issue of the *Herald of Truth*, there appeared a discussion designed to stimulate the growth of a knowledge and appreciation of the plight of the Russian Mennonites and to instill a desire to aid this movement, if it should materialize. The first tangible connection which served to supplement the previous communication by mail between these Mennonite groups was reported in the *Herald of Truth* of August, 1872. Here after a graphic description of the manner in which the Russian Mennonite leaders had been seeking information of this land through the study of letters, books, papers, and maps, Funk described the arrival at his home of four young men from Europe who were seeking first hand information about America. This group, among whom was Bernhard Warkentin, had arrived in Elkhart earlier in the summer and later became one of the main factors in aiding the immigration. These men remained in the Funk home for a week-end before continuing on their unofficial exploration of the western United States and Canada.

During this trip they traveled through Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Minnesota and the territory of Dakota.<sup>9</sup> In September the youths returned to Elkhart where they enjoyed the hospitality of the Funk home for several days before three of them continued east and sailed from New York on the third of October.<sup>10</sup>

This manifestation of interest and determination by the Mennonite youth to escape the military laws of their homeland crystallized and intensified Funk's fascination for the immigration project. When he and Bernhard Warkentin, who had remained in the United States, received



an invitation from M. G. Hazard, agent of the land department of the Northern Pacific Railroad, to inspect the land along the Northern Pacific in Minnesota and Dakota, he accepted.<sup>11</sup> In September Funk began the first of a series of journeys which he made to aid the immigrants. Accompanied by Hazard, the party arrived at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on the evening of September 18, 1872. The next day they crossed the Mississippi River and reached Minneapolis, Minnesota. In this city, they conferred with several officials and visited the Minnesota State Fair where produce from the Northern Pacific Railroad area was on exhibition. Here as on the entire trip, Funk's interest was focused on securing information that would be of value to his Russian brethren. His diary of these days is filled with the description of the varieties and sizes of the various fruits, grapes, vegetables, grain, and livestock on exhibit. After leaving the fair, the party examined the industrial and commercial establishments of the area, where they noted any information concerning prices, wages or the availability of supplies which might be valuable to a new settlement.

From Minneapolis the party journeyed to Duluth, Minnesota, which was then only three years old. Continuing west they arrived at Brainerd, Minnesota, on September 23, at Glynden on September 25 and at Fargo, Dakota, on the 26. Leaving Fargo, they rode via a freight train over the comparatively level prairie of the Red River Valley where Funk noted that there was sufficient water of good quality everywhere and a rich fertile soil at most places. On the evening of September 28 they arrived at a small settlement named Jamestown, where they slept in bunks in a hotel which consisted of a large circular shaped tent provided with a "wash stool, a barrel of water, two wash dishes, a looking glass, two towels, a table, and the usual other paraphernalia of a frontier boarding-house." During the next day they traversed the James Valley, where they travelled over the prairie in an army wagon pulled by four mules. The Red River territory pleased Funk especially well because it was less dry than the prairie and contained an abundance of timber. This was the last area which they surveyed on this trip. On October 1, Funk left Warkentin and Hazard at St. Paul and continued home alone.<sup>12</sup>

The enthusiasm with which Funk viewed this area as a possible home for the Russian Mennonites was expressed in the November, 1872, issue of the *Herald of Truth*. In this article one can feel the disappointment he entertained because the United States had permitted Canada to offer the more inviting terms to the prospective settlers, thus possibly presenting a more inviting picture to them. His keen interest in the welfare of his Russian brethren, as well as his sincere desire to increase the fellowship and acquaintance between the American and Russian Mennonites seemed to be mixed with a patriotic fervor as he wrote, that "the United States climate was most advantageous to settle in Western America, but the failure of a special inducement by the government might turn all the immigrants to Canada. Surely," he continued, "an accession to a state of thirty or forty thousand industrious farmers, herdsmen and mechanics would have been inviting. Never, however, did he permit his desire for the accomplishment of the proposed project to dull his realization of the responsibilities which would face the American Mennonites in the event of an actual immigration

movement. In this same article he continued with the plea that, "our church . . . ought to think seriously over this matter, the new relations into which it will bring us; the liberality and generosity it will require of us . . . a helping hand, information and a kind of fraternal feeling towards them . . . our sympathies and our prayers. Let the church not be behind in good works and good words and a friendly welcome, with willing hearts to help if need be."<sup>13</sup>

Early in 1873, Funk received a letter from the Russian Mennonite leaders which stated that the Russian Government had finally issued the decree that six out of every one thousand men must be drafted for military duty without exception and that this was forcing the necessity of actual emigration of the brethren.<sup>14</sup> Until now Funk did not seem to desire any hasty action, but with this information his hesitation completely disappeared. In the next issue of the *Herald of Truth*, he began a concerted effort to reach his reader in both the United States and in Russia to explain the full implications of the situation and to exhort them to provide whatever help or cooperation possible. The February issue, of which 20,000 extra copies of the German issue were sent to Russia,<sup>15</sup> was dedicated to the Mennonites of that country, and their needs. Practically every page of this issue was concerned with matter relating to either the history of the Russian Mennonites, their present plight, explanations of possible locations for them in America or an estimate of the action necessary to accomplish their emigration. Funk put so much material into this section that it was necessary to publish a February supplement to carry the regular articles and news which were waiting publication. He apparently received some criticism for this extra stress on this subject because in this supplement he printed an editorial in which he apologetically stated his reasons for spending so much space on it. He wrote that he was merely doing for the Russian Mennonites what he would wish them to do for him if the situation were reversed. He continued his statement by writing that in his opinion the peace doctrines of Christ have already only a very few witnesses. If in helping to bring these people to America, he is able to prevent the loss of their peace witness, he will feel that a very worth while and influential task has been accomplished for Christ.<sup>16</sup>

The year 1873 was spent largely in preparation. Letters were exchanged which explained and evaluated the necessary activity of both the Russian and the American Mennonites; transportation companies were approached to secure reduced fare for the transporting of so large a group, methods of collecting finances from the American brethren and of distributing them to the needy were considered; and committees were chosen to supervise the settlement. By the end of the year full machinery was in preparation. In February of the year, however, Funk and a small group of interested friends, including Amos Herr of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, David Goerz, Russian Mennonite schoolteacher in the parochial school in Summerfield, Illinois, Christian Krehbiel, elder of the Mennonite Church at Summerfield and Bernhard Warkentin met in their desire to help these people and it was largely due to their tireless efforts that the congregations responded to the call. During the year, the *Herald of Truth* was occupied with material on the Russian emigration. At the same time Funk was attempting

to arouse interest by sending personal letters to his many church acquaintances. Since they were without a church organization within which to work, these men acted without conference sanction until a church committee was appointed. During this time, however, they advocated the creation of committee by the various conferences, since they preferred to have the work organized by an official church body.

Convinced now that no exemption from military service would be granted them, the Russian brethren were also active. First, they arranged to send a deputation to Ameica to spy out the land. Second, since many of their number were poor and others would lose much of their wealth in the unfavorable conditions under which they would be forced to sell their property if they wished to emigrate, they petitioned various sources for financial aid. They first petitioned the United States and Canadian governments to aid them in financing their long voyage. Next, anticipating a possible refusal of this requested aid, several colonies also petitioned their American brethren for aid.<sup>17</sup> These petitions were sent with their representatives in the 1873 deputation.

The deputation consisted of twelve leaders of the Russian Mennonites who came to America in the summer of 1873 at the invitation and expense of the Canadian Government to investigate the opportunities for settlement in a climate of toleration and freedom. The cost of the deputation was \$670<sup>18</sup> but it resulted in the final decision of some eighteen thousand people to settle in the regions of Manitoba and western United States. The twelve men who represented different communities traveled together for a large part of their journey in America but they did not start out in one group. Each group, however, stopped at Elkhart during its travel in this country. The first three men to arrive were Henry Wiebe and Jacob Peters of the Bergthal community and Cornelius Buhr, an independent large farmer traveling on his own. They came to Elkhart on the twenty-third day of April, 1873.<sup>19</sup> After remaining for two days at the Funk home, they continued on to Chicago where they were met by Warkentin, who with Christian Krehbiel, escorted them on their trip over the states west of the Mississippi River.<sup>20</sup> Late in May two other groups of the deputation arrived in the States. One of these consisted of five men, Jacob Buller and Leonhard Sudermann, from the Molotschna colony, Tobias Unruh from Karolswalde in Poland, Andreas Schrag of the Swiss group in Volhynia and Wm. Ewert from Obernassau in Prussia. These men had apparently been in close touch with the Mennonites in both Ontario and Pennsylvania. Buller, Sudermann and Unruh went to Ontario and Schrag and Ewert to Pennsylvania. This delayed their arrival in Elkhart until June 6. In the meantime the third group, consisting of Cornelius Toews and David Klaassen of the *Kleine Gemeinde* and the two Hutterian representatives, Paul and Lorenz Tschetter arrived at Funk's home on May 24.

At the time of their arrival, Funk was in Illinois at a church conference. When he returned home at ten on the evening of Monday, May 26, he found the four men waiting for him. While waiting for Sudermann's group to arrive, Funk, who had been invited to accompany the deputation as an interpreter and adviser, visited several churches in Illinois, returning home



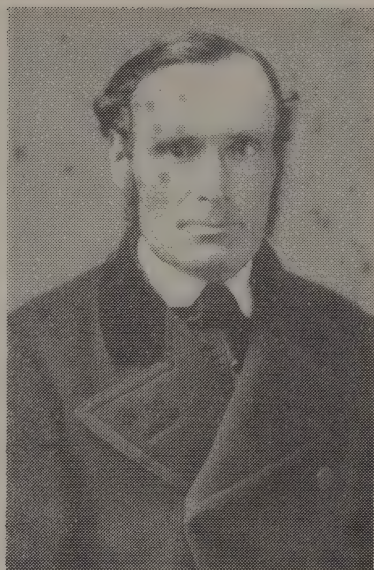
on June 2. Sudermann and his group were still absent on June 3, so Funk and the Hutterian and the *Kleine Gemeinde* representatives, who had promised to meet the Berghthal group of three coming from Kansas to St. Paul on June 5, left Elkhart without them. In Chicago they waited for twenty-four hours before continuing to St. Paul. Arriving at St. Paul on June 6 they were joined by Wiebe, Peters, and Buhr as had been planned. Here a dispatch was received which stated that the new party was coming. After leaving word for the new party to follow, the group of eight continued on to Duluth, which they left on June 7 for Dakota, accompanied by C. B. Powers, a representative of the Northern Pacific Railway.<sup>21</sup> After they arrived in Fargo, they toured the country along the James, Red, and Cheyenne rivers while waiting for the other group to join them.

The new party had arrived in Chicago on June 7 and, accompanied by Wm. Hespeler, representing the Canadian Government, M. C. Hiller of the Northern Pacific, and Jacob Y. Shantz, an Ontario Mennonite, they hastened on to join the main group.<sup>22</sup> This union was accomplished in Fargo on the ninth and the journey up the Red River to Winnipeg, in Manitoba, began on the thirteenth. To reach their destination, which was only 240 land miles distant, they were forced to travel over 650 miles of twisting, turning river.<sup>23</sup> They arrived in Winnipeg on June 17 after nearly 5 days of travel. This was followed by a discouraging trip through the region south of Winnipeg during which they worked their way over marshland and through an almost completely uninhabited region where the few crops which were growing appeared to be maturing far too late for the best harvest. Dissatisfied, they cut their journey short and returned to Winnipeg on June 21.<sup>24</sup>

By this time five of the brethren—Ewert, the two brothers Tschetter, Unruh and Schrag—decided against Manitoba as a place for settlement, and agreed to conclude their explorations in Canada and to return to the States to further explore the land in Dakota. The remaining brethren were persuaded by the Canadian representative's pleas to consider the land west of Winnipeg and agreed to explore that area.<sup>25</sup> Funk readily consented to accompany the group going south and the five of them left Winnipeg by boat on the twenty-first of June.<sup>26</sup> These five reached Pembina, near the international boundary on June 23 and used the ensuing two days to explore the Pembina Valley. This they accomplished with the aid of an army conveyance which was furnished them by a Colonel Wheaton, United States Army. An incident occurred during these two days near a small town named Wall Halla which greatly impressed the brethren. In this village they visited at the house of a German, named George Emmerling. After leaving Emmerling's residence, they traveled a half day before Ewert noticed that he had left his blanket behind. While they conjectured as to a possible method of retrieving this blanket, they were surprised to see Emmerling drive up in his buggy. He immediately inquired whether any of the party had missed anything. Only the blanket had been missed, but upon Emmerling's earnest solicitation to know if nothing else had been missed, a more careful examination revealed that Ewert had also forgotten his "pocketbook" which had a considerable sum of money in it. Emmerling thereupon presented the two articles with an admonition to be more careful hereafter.



LEONHARD SUDERMANN



ELDER WILHELM EWERT

Delegates of 1873

Ewert was quite amazed at this unexpected kindness and could only say, "So this is a specimen of American dishonesty of which we have heard so much."<sup>27</sup> During the next week they inspected railway land in the vicinity of Moorehead, traveling in open wagons and sleeping in tents.

On the next Sunday, July 6, Sudermann, Buller, and Shantz met them in Fargo. After they had inspected the prairies near Fargo for a few days, the whole party rode the stage along the Red River into Minnesota to Fort Abersrombie. From here they journey on to Breckenridge in Dakota where they boarded the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad for the trip towards St. Paul. After making numerous stops to inspect the country they reached Minneapolis on July 12. They remained here over the week-end and then journeyed on to the vicinity of Mountain Lake where they stayed for two days. From here they traveled directly to Sioux City, Iowa, where they were met by M. Hansen of the Union Pacific Railroad, who served as their host during their visit to the country between Sioux City and Omaha, Nebraska, at which junction G. O. Manchester of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad greeted them.<sup>28</sup> The journey through the Burlington country was made in wagons and tents. In this area they crossed the Platte, Little Blue and Republican rivers, to arrive at Lincoln, Nebraska. From thence the party crossed the Missouri River by rail and arrived at Pacific Junction where the Tschetters and Unruh left the party and started for Chicago. Those remaining went on the Omaha and St. Joseph Railroad toward St. Louis.

Somewhere along this route Funk stopped off to visit his brother, who resided at Chillicothe, Missouri. The rest went on to Summerfield, Illinois.

Funk arrived home on July 26, accompanied by Sudermann, Schrag and Shantz whom he had rejoined in Chicago. The journey had lasted about two months. During this time Funk had served as interpreter, had maintained a complete record of his activities and of the country which he had visited and had accepted every opportunity to preach and to witness for his beliefs. After he arrived home he published a complete record of the two months activities in the *Herald of Truth*.<sup>29</sup> In this manner he increased the knowledge of his readers concerning the deputation activities and enhanced their interest in the project.

His acquaintance with the delegation enabled Funk to present its needs to his readers with a greater clarity and force. This he began immediately. His first appeal for financial aid was printed in the July *Herald of Truth*, 1873, in the form of a petition which had been sent with Andreas Schrag of the Swiss Mennonites from Volhynia and which requested a loan to help finance their emigration. He prefaced this reprint with a personal appeal which suggested that the need may amount to about six or eight thousand dollars for this one group, a figure which was destined to grow into a total of much greater size.<sup>30</sup>

The readers expressed an immediate interest by submitting letters which suggested plans to be used in the collection of money. In one of these letters Jacob Leisy of Summerfield, Illinois, presented the first public expression of a desire for a central committee which could coordinate the efforts of the individuals and groups who were now anxious to help their brethren. He also exhibited the spirit with which the American Mennonites were grasping the opportunity to help their fellow churchmen by suggesting that any loan should be given without interest.<sup>31</sup> In the September issue, Funk informed his readers that a second specific call for aid had been received from the Prussian Mennonite churches in Poland signed by Tobias Unruh. These pleas were followed by the suggestion that each church should immediately appoint a solicitor to supervise the local collection of money, that a central committee be appointed to coordinate the work and that all congregations should plan to loan or contribute the money needed by the destitute brethren for their passage.<sup>32</sup> Funk continued to receive letters suggesting methods by which the financing of this undertaking might be most efficiently handled.<sup>33</sup> By October he had received the wishes of the people sufficiently to present a composite plan of procedure in the *Herald of Truth*. This plan, which was the one followed during the decade of immigration, consisted of ten items which are presented in substance:

1. Let the minister or deacons, bring the subject before the people at once.
2. Let each person decide whether to give or to loan his money.
3. If the money is to be given as a gift, give it to the deacon to pay out as needed.
4. If it is a loan, make a subscription list and be ready to pay as needed.
5. The various conferences should appoint a committee as soon as possible to receive the contributions and to put them in a good bank where it can be withdrawn at any time.

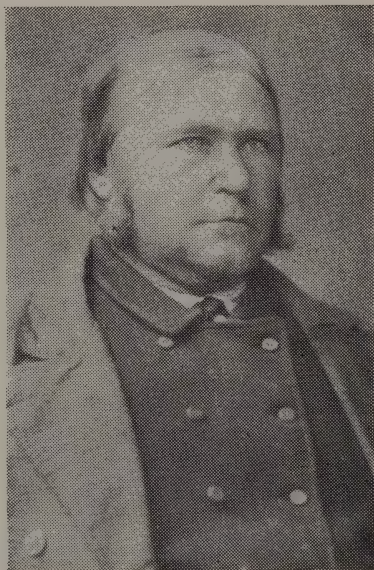


6. Upon the receipt of notice from the proper authorities in Europe, the committee will pay the passage in New York City upon the arrival of the immigrant.
7. The churches presenting the loans should be given notes of seven years' duration.
8. Notes should be given in the name of the church paying, the church then being responsible to the member.
9. The committee should keep a correct account of receipts and expenditures and should publish a monthly statement in the church papers.
10. The committee should have the right to use the money as needed.<sup>34</sup>

The first aid committee in the United States was appointed by the Indiana-Michigan Conference District at the annual conference meeting held at the Yellow Creek Church on October 9, 1873. The members of this committee were John F. Funk, Isaac Kilmer, and Bernhard Warkentin.<sup>35</sup> This authorization of the Conference provided Funk with an extra encouragement which he expressed in the *Herald of Truth* of November, 1893. In the same issue an editorial appeared which plead for immediate action on the part of all ministers and deacons of all the Mennonite congregations, "Whether old or new Mennonites, Reformed Mennonites, Evangelical Mennonites, Swiss Mennonites, Amish Mennonites or by whatsoever other peculiar name they may be known."<sup>36</sup>



PAUL TSCHETTER



LORENZ TSCHETTER

Hutterian Delegates of 1873

The ensuing autumn of 1873 was a busy one for John Funk, who now had the extra work in connection with the immigration added to his already full program. In the mid-summer of 1873 the first group of refugees, which was composed of the more wealthy families coming from the Crimea, had arrived in Elkhart and had presented Funk with the responsibility of lodging them. On August 20, a second party of nineteen families, about ninety persons, arrived. On August 25, a third party of seven families, including Jacob and Peter Funk and Cornelius Jansen and his son, Peter, arrived. Some of these went to Summerfield while the men went west to search for a suitable location for permanent settlement.<sup>37</sup> One group went to Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Others of them finally settled near Yankton, Dakota, or in Marion and McPherson counties, Kansas. The last group left Elkhart on January 5, 1874.<sup>38</sup>

On December 2, 1873, the committee which had been chosen by the Indiana-Michigan Conference met with a committee of three—Christian Krehbiel, Daniel Baer and Bernhard Warkentin—which had been appointed by the Western District Conference at Summerfield, Illinois, on November 17, 1873. This meeting was held at Summerfield, and was called to coordinate the efforts of the two groups and to plan for the actual immigration proceedings. The two groups decided to elect a temporary board of directors and to merge under the name "Board of Guardians." In the new organization, Christian Krehbiel was chosen president, David Goerz, secretary; John Funk, treasurer, and Bernhard Warkentin, agent, with Kilmer and Baer as members of the committee. Once organized the committee decided to: negotiate with the railroads to obtain the most favorable terms, speed up the collection of gifts and loans from all traditional peace churches, invite the cooperation of all the conferences, being willing to change the present board of directors to facilitate this cooperation, maintain records of the amounts of money loaned and provide notes for the creditors and outline a circular to inform the immigrants of what they are expected to do to cooperate with the Board.<sup>39</sup>

An earlier general circular had been sent to Russia by the separate committees in December, 1873. This circular assured the Russian brethren of aid in the form of gifts and loans and informed them of the procedure of securing aid. It also assured the immigrants that German speaking agents would be appointed to contact the steamship and railroad companies, care for their needs in European ports, receive them when they arrived in America and give them such counsel as they may need. All emigrants were urged to cooperate by having all the needed certificates ready before leaving the old country. The Board of Guardians presented these blanks to the pastor of each congregation. They in turn distributed them to needy members of their community. To be valid they had to be certified with the church seal and signed by the minister and elder of the home congregation and the bearer. All able immigrants were expected to help the needy among them to the fullest possible extent before anyone in any particular group should be permitted American aid.<sup>40</sup>

The second circular was printed in February, 1874. It reiterated many of the provisions of the first, but in more detail and it reassured the immi-

grants that plans to aid them were progressing. It informed them that all aid must, however, be accepted in the form of a loan since the gifts were insufficient. It requested each church to send a list of names of the needy to the Board so its work could be made more effective.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile Warkentin had been contacting various transportation companies in an attempt to secure the cheapest possible rates for the immigrants. By February he had arranged terms with the Inman Steamship Line, which operated between Hamburg and New York via Liverpool and Hull, and Erie Railroad Company, whereby these companies agreed to furnish transportation from Hamburg to the various desired destinations in the west for \$40—\$42 per immigrant if the Board agreed to use their influence to route as many passengers as possible over their system. The contract was signed on February 27, 1874, by Warkentin and by Jacob Y. Shantz, the representative of the Canadian brethren. In this contract, marked as confidential by the officials of the transportation companies, the Inman Line promised to provide good and wholesome food, sufficient space for comfort, and German speaking stewards and to pay the Board of Guardians agent in Hamburg. The Erie Railroad agreed to provide prompt and efficient service with sufficient room for comfort and meals at a reasonable rate on all immigrant trains.<sup>42</sup>

The Board of Guardians was not, however, the only immigrant aid committee at this time. In 1873, the Ontario brethren had organized a committee with Jacob Y. Shantz as president. Although this committee remained a separate unit throughout its existence, it consistently cooperated with the Board of Guardians. Shantz signed the Inman contracts with Warkentin, some of the Canadian funds were routed through the Board of Guardians' account in the Inman Line deposits, and Shantz maintained contact with Funk and had the Canadian Aid Committee's reports printed periodically in the *Herald of Truth*.<sup>43</sup>

By February, 1874, the Eastern conferences were the only ones without an aid organization. The members in the east had, however, responded well to the call for help that had reached them in the *Herald of Truth*, the largest church contribution to March, 1874, having come from the Franconia congregation in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore the western committees had anticipated their formal participation and had kept an opening for eastern representatives on the Board of Guardians in their first committee report.<sup>45</sup> The Lancaster Conference met in March and was expected to appoint a committee at that time. It is evident that the Board of Guardians hoped to join with them at the proper time. Warkentin, in a letter of February 27, 1874, wrote that he had received encouragement from Pennsylvania in hearing that they were anticipating the creation of a committee in the coming conference to "cooperate with us." To make sure that the invitation for the merging of all committees was appreciated by the eastern brethren he urged Funk to insert a notice in the *Herald of Truth* to explain that the Board of Guardians could be changed if the Pennsylvania committee was not satisfied with it.<sup>46</sup>

To make certain that the terms for merger were clear, Funk wrote to Amos Herr of Franconia of March 27 advising him of the desires of the



Board of Guardians to cooperate with the Pennsylvania brethren. In his answer to Funk, Herr related the appointment of Gabriel Baer, of Montgomery County, John Shenk, of Lancaster and Isaac Eby, of Boyerstown, to the Lancaster Conference aid committee. He also promised to show Funk's letter to the committee and to ask them to correspond with him, but, he added, "There seems to be a general regret that there was not an arrangement hit with the Quaker Line at Philadelphia (the Red Star Line). Brother, I think it is essentially necessary that you have an interview with our committee."<sup>47</sup> About two weeks later this committee met with the other existing committees in Pennsylvania and chose a board of directors, which they named the Mennonite Executive Aid Committee of Pennsylvania. In this committee John Shenk was named secretary; Gabriel Baer, treasurer; Herman Godshall, corresponding secretary; and Casper Hett, Philadelphia, agent.<sup>48</sup>

The main obstacle to the forming of a combined committee appears to have been the desire of the Pennsylvania brethren to deal with the Red Star Line, which was largely owned by Quakers, who had always been friendly to the Mennonites. Soon after the organization of the Executive Aid Committee, a contract was signed with this line whose ships sailed between Antwerp and Philadelphia. This contract afforded several advantages which had not been achieved in the Inman Line contract. The rates agreed on were considerably lower than those in the Inman contract. The Red Star Line agreed to furnish transportation from Antwerp to the desired destination in western America for \$35—\$37 per immigrant, depending on the distance traversed, and allowed a reduction for the children and baggage equivalent to that of the Inman contract.<sup>49</sup> The land transportation was furnished by the Pennsylvania Railroad, whose agent, Francis Funk, a brother of John Funk, provided them a special guarantee of good treatment. Furthermore, the Red Star Line ships docked at Philadelphia, and thereby enhanced the opportunity of the Pennsylvania residents to minister to the needs of the travelers before sending them west.

Funk's attitude toward this arrangement was expressed in an editorial in the *Herald of Truth* where he expressed sorrow that the arrangements were not all under one committee, but added that "now that it is so, we shall take an entirely impartial view of the matter, and shall try to carry out in good faith what we have agreed to . . . We wish our brethren in Pennsylvania God's blessing in their work and trust they will be able to accomplish much good. . . . There will be enough for us all to do and we must commend the zeal of our brethren everywhere in this great and important work."<sup>50</sup> The later action of all three committees shows that a very great spirit of cooperation did exist between them in all their activities. When the Pennsylvania committee organized in April, Funk and Shantz were both invited to attend the meeting. In a letter to Funk on April 9, 1874, Schantz mentioned an invitation to come to Lancaster County for a meeting of the different committees, but added that he was not yet sure that he would go. He apparently decided to accept, however, because Funk wrote in his diary on a later date of having been present at a meeting of the "Pennsylvania Russian Aid Committee" with J. Y. Shantz of Ontario, H. B. Shelly of Milfred, Indiana, and some of the eastern brethren

on April 4.<sup>51</sup> Funk accompanied Amos Herr and John Shenk to Philadelphia to meet with representatives of the Red Star Line, apparently to discuss the terms for the above mentioned contract. Once this new contract was accomplished, Funk used his influence to have the Russian Mennonites take advantage of its better terms, despite the agreement of the Board of Guardians to use their influence to route all the immigrants over the Inman Line. In a correspondence with his brother, Francis Funk, he arranged to have the Red Star agent in Antwerp accept Board of Guardian certificates and to notify the immigrants of this advantage.<sup>62</sup> On June 20 he wrote a letter to Leonhard Sudermann in Russia informing him of the savings to be affected with the use of the Red Star Line.<sup>53</sup> Near the same time he wrote another leader in Russia advising him of the arrangements which had been completed by the Pennsylvania Committee and urging him to take advantage of this situation. In doing this he presented the following five reasons which help us to understand his thinking concerning this aspect of the immigrant picture:

1. The owners of the Red Star Line are Quakers and are very friendly to us and are concerned about our well being.
2. The emigrants can be certain of the most excellent treatment in their care.
3. The passage is cheaper, both for the committee and for those who are able to pay their fare.
4. The Pennsylvania Committee wishes to give only to the Red Star Line because the Quakers "take part in our things."
5. The Pennsylvania brethren are able to provide more money than the rest of the groups together, are willing to furnish homes among the brethren for the poor and the weak until they are able to go on and have promised to furnish an immigrant house for all in Philadelphia, a convenience that is not available in New York.<sup>54</sup>

Although the Board of Guardians continued to deal directly with the Inman Line, Funk gave much support to the Pennsylvania company. Finally, in 1876, he transferred the Board's business entirely to the Red Star Line.

When, in the autumn of 1873, the Mennonites of America realized that the envisioned immigration would materialize by the next spring, they responded wholeheartedly to the call for financial aid. Each congregation organized so that one or a few men were responsible to supply the Board of Guardians with the subscribed money as needed. The first receipts came as gifts and by February 1, 1874, over \$1,000 had been donated.<sup>55</sup> The largest donations to this time had come from the Sonnenberg congregation in Wayne County, Ohio, which had given \$145 and from the Amish church in the Kishicoquilis Valley, Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, which had given \$135.<sup>56</sup> To this time, the Canadian Aid Committee, which had gotten a head start, had far outstripped all the others with a reported \$7,488 ready for use when needed. Of this amount \$909 had been presented by the Amish brethren.<sup>57</sup>

Encouraging as this seemed, these amounts were but a small beginning. The full extent of the responsibility resting upon the Board was emphasized

by a letter which Funk received from the Mennonites of Poland in January, which enumerated the amount that would be necessary to transport all those desiring to come to America from this area in 1874. Arranged according to the need of each village the list was as follows:

Karolswalde	\$ 9,000.00
Karolsberge	2,750.00
Jadweninne	5,600.00
Gruenthal	2,550.00
Fuerstendorf	5,400.00
Antonovka	11,000.00
Waldheim	3,000.00.

A total of \$40,000.00 was thus needed for the immigration of this colony.<sup>58</sup>

The Board of Guardians placed its money in the Home Savings Bank of Chicago until a sufficient amount had accumulated to deposit it in New York City in charge of John G. Dale, agent of the Inman Line. The first amount was deposited in New York on April 20, 1874. At that time \$5,000 was recorded to the account of the Board of Guardians. On April 30, 1874, a second deposit of \$5,000 was recorded and on August 10, a third, this time for \$5,021.<sup>59</sup> By the end of the year \$18,887.41 had been deposited. Of this \$13,099.64 had been paid for passage for destitute immigrants from Russia.<sup>60</sup> Besides the Board's deposits the Canadian Committee had deposited \$1,500 in the Board fund with the Inman Line.<sup>61</sup> According to an estimate by Funk, the Pennsylvania committee had deposited at least \$15,000 with the Red Star Line by September of this same year.<sup>62</sup>

This year, 1874, was the high point in the immigration movement and it produced many exciting experiences for the people involved. The routes which were taken by the immigrants covered several different territories. Some went through Elkhart, Indiana, others through Summerfield, Illinois, while some stopped only in Pennsylvania before going on to their destination in the west. Whenever a new group came, the Mennonite communities provided what help they could for them. This entailed much work and responsibility for the leaders of the communities involved. In Elkhart, Funk usually carried this responsibility, which produced some interesting experiences for him. The first group to arrive at Elkhart consisted of only four men who had been on their way for exactly one month. Before the summer was over, however, much larger groups had partaken of the hospitality of the Mennonites of that area. Probably the largest group was one of seven hundred persons which arrived in Elkhart on August 31. This group required eight passenger coaches to accommodate it but these people remained in Elkhart for only one day before going on to their destination.<sup>63</sup>

News of departures from Hamburg and of arrivals in New York continued throughout the months of May and June. The first large influx of settlers came in the months of July and August and in these months Funk was presented with his severest trials. During the night of Saturday, July 19, his daughter, Grace Ann, who had been sick and struggling for her life for several days, weakened and died. The grieving father, who had kept a hopeful vigil over his child for a greater part of the night, was greatly



fatigued by the next morning. Nevertheless, he was awakened early in the morning from his well-deserved sleep and informed that twenty-four families from Russia had arrived on the morning train and must be provided for. Later, concerning this situation, he wrote, "Under the circumstances it was indeed a question as to what I could do for them. But near the church was a vacant house, quite roomy. I secured the key and opened it. After hauling the heavy baggage and the old people to the house, I called a grocer in the vicinity and asked him to open his store and sell these people bread, meat, coffee, tea, etc. . . . They took the work into their own hands and washed, dressed, made dinner and at two o'clock had church services." These people remained in Elkhart for about a month before they continued on to Kansas where they finally settled.<sup>64</sup>

This group had just departed when the large Alexanderwohl group arrived on August 31 under the leadership of Jacob Buller. When Funk returned home that day after having preached the funeral service of a member of the previous group, who had become ill and died, he received the telegram informing him that the Alexanderwohl group would arrive at six o'clock. Of this experience Funk wrote, "This was one of my hardest trials, seven hundred (strangers) as a company to be fed and taken care of was an unusual task, but by the help of our heavenly Father we took care of them. They came, and in the evening I took Brother Buller and his companion to my home and entertained them, and a little later the representatives of four different railroad corporations came to see if they could induce this group to settle on their land that each had for sale. . . . we decided not to leave them in Elkhart. But in twenty-four hours after they arrived, the same train they came in would leave Elkhart again . . . for the fair grounds at Lincoln, Nebraska."<sup>65</sup> They later settled north of Newton in Kansas.

The month of July was the high point in the immigration of 1874. From a total of the 6,400 who arrived that year, nearly 2,000 found homes during that month. Throughout this busy year Funk was constantly active. His activities included presenting a hospitable atmosphere to those who stopped in Elkhart, receiving and transmitting messages of the immigration activity, securing contacts for the immigrants with railroad and state officials, publishing information of the immigration proceedings in the *Herald of Truth*, receiving and allocating donations, maintaining cooperation between the different committees and executing many other assignments which often faced him unexpectedly. Although he often met with unpleasant situations in performing these tasks, he only once showed any sign of disgust or anger in his letters or in his diary. On November 13, 1874, a cold fall day, a group of immigrants under the leadership of Paul Tschetter arrived unexpectedly in Elkhart. After Funk had vainly sought all day to find lodging for them, he wrote in his diary. "Became completely disgusted and tired of such a set of nonsensical fools as we have here in the city of Elkhart. Houses—a hundred houses are said to stand idle and empty in the town and yet people rather have them stand empty than to rent them to persons who want to occupy them and fill them up. They seem to be afraid of these people. I must think our (Elkhart) people are a very narrow-minded, unfeeling people."<sup>66</sup>

A movement of this scope demanded the cooperation of many people. Much work was done by individuals who opened their homes or purses as the need arose. Others spent their full time at low pay. At each port used by the refugees the aid committees had representatives who facilitated the activities necessary for a successful journey. Experienced help of this kind was necessary because fraud faced the immigrants at nearly every turn. The necessity for changing currency as they journeyed in different countries promised a loss to the inexperienced traveller. Other dangers lay in the schemes of ne'er-do-wells who frequented places where unsuspecting, friendless people congregated. Against these frauds and dangers the Boards' agents were constantly on guard. In Hamburg, Heinrich H. Schutt, a member of the Mennonite congregation of that place was able to gain important advantages in transportation fare reductions, in routing travel along the most direct route, and in presenting much other information which isolated groups would not be likely to obtain. In America either Bernhard Warkentin or David Goerz met every group that landed in New York. These men were given special permits to enter Castle Garden, the immigration center in New York, to help the travelers. Here they would purchase railroad tickets to the proper places and ward off other agents of all kinds and persons who attempted to impose on the immigrants often under the guise of "Christian love or disinterested benevolence."<sup>67</sup>

Not all the immigrants were able to finance a farming enterprise after they had arrived in America. The Board of Guardians helped some of these stock their farms, but its primary purpose was to furnish passage money, not to finance business expeditions once the immigrants had arrived. Others of these people were given an opportunity to remain in the East for a time and to work for established Mennonite farmers until they had paid their passage and saved money to join their former relatives. Many of the American brethren were willing to give more liberally toward the immigration if they could be repaid in this fashion. Many from Russia also agreed to this arrangement which would provide homes for them until they could obtain their own, give them employment, pay for their passage and help them to become acquainted with the American methods of labor.<sup>68</sup> How many immigrants accepted this opportunity cannot be ascertained, but there is evidence that a considerable number did.

On December 25, the last contingent to arrive in 1874 docked in Philadelphia. The winter as well as the aid committees were on hand to greet them. This group of Prussian background came from Poland under the leadership of Tobias Unruh. Reference was made to it before. The party numbered about 700 of which nearly 500 were destitute. Faced with this situation the Mennonites of Bucks, Montgomery, and Lancaster counties, Pennsylvania, rallied to their aid and made provision for them to remain with them until the warmer weather of spring would render conditions more feasible for western settlement. Nevertheless they refused the invitation and continued on, to face the winter in the west. Why they did not remain in Pennsylvania or who was responsible for their going has not been fully determined. (See Christian Krehbiel's account). Bernhard Warkentin, who was nearest to them on their arrival in Kansas, wrote to Funk that their leaders seem to have thought that they could very well take care of them-

selves.<sup>69</sup> When they arrived in Kansas they were without destination or provision. Warkentin received them and with the help of \$500 which had been taken from the money earmarked for passage by the Board of Guardians, \$1,000 which the Pennsylvania aid committee had sent him and \$300 which had been donated by the Summerfield congregation, set up plans to care for them to remain in a railroad immigrant house that he found available. This was a new problem for the Board of Guardians which had been organized to provide passage money only. To provide for these people would cost \$50 per day for food alone. Further, land on which these people might affect a permanent home had to be supplied before they would become self-supporting.

Funk and the other American leaders appear to have been no little dismayed with the action which necessitated this extra expense and labor for the Board of Guardians, who took the responsibility for these people, but they publicly blamed no one. They rather spent their energies to raise money to care for the group and to discover ways of administering this care. Warkentin arranged with the railroads to ship relief food to the colony free of charge.<sup>70</sup> A committee, named the Kansas Central Relief Committee, was organized to administer the relief goods upon its arrival from the east.<sup>71</sup> On March 8, 1875, the Board of Guardians convened in a special session to discuss the problem. At this meeting the Board decided to place each family on forty acres of land and to provide it with such implements, cattle, and seed as would prove absolutely necessary. The money used in this operation would be loaned to them at 6 per cent interest, with the whole community accepting the responsibility for the repayment of the loan. The local committee was charged with the administration of the plan under supervision of the Board of Guardians which would provide the money.

They decided to locate the colony at Canton, about fifteen miles north of Halstead, Kansas. By early spring each family had been allotted its portion. Construction of temporary housing and plowing for spring planting began immediately.<sup>72</sup> All material for building purposes and for farming operation was purchased with money which had been loaned to the colony by the American Mennonites. This sum, which was handled by D. S. Holde-man, the local committee chairman, totaled \$6,875.50 by June 6, 1875. With this amount the colony had purchased a minimum of farm equipment and material to complete twenty-eight houses at the cost of \$40.35 per house.

Twenty more houses were also under construction at this time.<sup>73</sup> As their second winter in the United States approached, the outlook for these people seemed more favorable, but their situation was still far from comfortable. Money was almost non-existent in the colony. Their first crops had not yielded abundantly. Many homes were without sufficient fuel. Food was scarce and clothing was becoming worn and thin. Because of this condition the committee maintained a connection with the colony and continued to send supplies to those who were in greatest need. This aid was administered by the local committee until it disbanded on May 16, 1876. After this the Board of Guardians dealt directly with the colony until help was no longer needed. The total financial help given this community through the Kansas Relief Committee was \$12,418.06. Of this amount \$1,834.23 had



been spent for provisions to carry the colony over the first winter. The sum of \$10,351.18 was used to provide farming implements, household furniture and the like and \$232.65 went for miscellaneous items.<sup>74</sup> This does not, however, include the \$1,000 which the Executive Aid Committee of Pennsylvania presented them. Of the \$12,418.06 mentioned above, approximately \$10,400.00 resulted from Funk's appeal to the readers of the *Herald of Truth*. The amount of \$631.71 was taken from the passage money in the treasury of the Board of Guardians and the rest was contributed through other members of the committee. Of the total, 63 per cent or over \$7,800 was donated as a free gift. The rest was loaned on a five-year term.<sup>75</sup>

The immigration movement continued through 1875 and by November of that year over 1,200 families had arrived. Although immigrants continued to arrive throughout the remaining years of the decade, the main rush of the movement was diminished. Consequently the strain on the finances of the Board decreased and where as they had expended over \$13,000 for passage money in 1874, they spent only \$3,682 for this purpose in 1875.<sup>77</sup> The remaining need for assistance en route and for securing land and implements for settlement, however, created sufficient motivation for continued labor. This continued need and the problem of the Polish Mennonite group was the subject discussed at the regular meeting of the Board of Guardians at Halstead, Kansas, October 26-28, with the members of the Kansas Relief Committee present. The first business attacked at this time was the settlement of a dispute which arose when the members of the Stucky church objected to the position held by Christian Hirschler, a member of the Kansas Relief Committee, because of a purchase of lumber made from the church by Hirschler. A committee of five, of which Funk was a member, spent two days and a night in apparently continuous session reviewing the case before they reached a decision. This decision fully acquitted Hirschler of the charges brought against him. After the decision was given, Funk relates, "All the interested parties acquiesced in the decision, freely forgave and asked forgiveness of each other and we believe a full and complete satisfaction and peace was established on all sides."

Another task of this meeting was to organize the above mentioned Mennonites from Poland into a church body, so it could assume the responsibility for the debt it owed to the Board of Guardians. This was affected under the title "The Canton Mennonite Church, of McPherson County, Kansas." After a preliminary organization was completed, the Board appointed Funk and Isaac Kilmer to inspect the settlements and to draw up notes on the laying out of the lands, so the railroad company could prepare and execute the contracts with the settlers. They also supervised the election of three men, who with the ministers were charged with forming a committee to provide the necessities of the church and to sign the notes for the money received by the church. The lesson of the Canton group had been a hard one and the Board considered means of more adequately controlling the future immigration. They decided to promise no more aid until the possibilities of fulfilling their present promises could be more easily seen. David Goerz offered his resignation as traveling agent. This was accepted but he continued as secretary.<sup>78</sup>

The election of the Canton committee was held on October 27. On the twenty-ninth, Funk, D. S. Holdeman, and Isaac Kilmer began drawing up the notes for the lands. By Saturday, October 30, the work at Canton was completed and Funk began a leisurely trip home in which he visited many of the new Mennonite settlements. He arrived home on November 2. While he was in the Canton settlement he had noted the conditions in which the people were living and later printed them in the *Herald of Truth*, using them to appeal to the people for further aid for these immigrants.<sup>79</sup> It was among these people that John Holdeman found many followers whom he organized into the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite.

By the end of 1875 the greatest work of the Board of Guardians was accomplished. Although it paid several thousand dollars for the passage of destitute immigrants during the remainder of the decade, this activity was now a routine one. The main problem that was discussed at the annual Board meeting at Halstead in November, 1876, concerned the proper methods of bonding and collecting outstanding loans. Since about one-fourth of the money the immigrants had received had been donated, the problem was how to treat all fairly when the time came for repayment of the loans. The method finally agreed upon consisted in taking notes from all the immigrants who had received aid for the full amount which had been received an equal portion as a gift. Each person who had loaned money would then receive as many notes as were required to cover the full amount that he had loaned. Thus if a man had loaned \$100, he received notes to the value of \$133.33, but since one fourth of the notes or \$33.33 was endorsed as paid, he collected only the \$100 due him. In this way the value of the gifts was represented and the creditors were repaid. The notes which remained in the hands of the Board after all the outstanding claims were satisfied were retained by the treasurer to pay any note which might not be collectible because of the death or illness of the debtor.<sup>80</sup> Funk, as treasurer, was charged to construct these notes and to send them to all who had loaned any money through the Board of Guardians. With the notes Funk also sent the address of the immigrant who had given the note and the name of the leader of the community in which the debtor lived. In most cases this system functioned smoothly when the notes came due early in the next decade. Except in the poorer communities as in the Canton settlement and in some areas of Dakota where the failure of the crops and the general poverty of the original settlers forced them to postpone payment beyond the due date, the notes were paid on time and with a minimum of friction. The majority of the creditors were reasonable in the cases of delay but enough difficulty was created to present the Board with a number of problems. Some of the immigrants had moved from their original settlement, leaving the Board the responsibility for the discovery of their new address. Many times the instructions explaining the process for liquidating the notes were not understood and additional explanations were necessary. The office of the Western Publishing House in Halstead, Kansas, where David Goerz, the Board secretary, had kept his records, was destroyed by fire and the records, of many of the emigration notes were lost.

After 1876 the amount of money which went through the Board of Guardian treasury slowed to a small percentage of the amounts handled

from 1874 through 1876. This gave Funk more time to do the many other tasks which confronted him. His interest in the migration did not, however, lessen and he continued to use his influence for their benefit whenever necessary. When he received a call for help from the Manitoba colony in 1877 he used his influence through the *Herald of Truth* to help them. In 1878, while visiting in the east he went to New York City to welcome a shipload of Mennonite immigrants who had just arrived.<sup>81</sup> The response to an editorial in the *Herald of Truth* provided nearly \$100 to pay expenses for medical attention needed by a mother in Dakota who had been severely burned.<sup>82</sup> For years after the actual emigration, the *Herald of Truth* informed Mennonites all over the world of the situation of the settlers in America.

The last episode in the Russian immigration with which Funk was connected occurred in the summer of 1884. A group of Russian Mennonites had settled in Khiva and Turkestan in Central Asia. The natives continually plagued them with thievery and other more serious offences, until they were nearly destitute. In 1884 they sought aid from relatives in America so they could also come to this land. The pioneer Mennonite settlers at once set up two aid committees which they named the Nebraska Aid Committee and the American Mennonite Aid Committee to raise funds to help their brethren in Central Asia as they themselves had been helped a short time before. They turned to Funk for aid in advertising their project. Funk responded and kept his readers informed of the situation.<sup>83</sup> Throughout the whole project the Nebraska Aid Committee provided \$6,519.45 to aid their brethren in Asia. Of this amount Funk was responsible for \$600.<sup>84</sup>

The total official receipts of the Board of Guardians amounted to \$40,484.16. Of this amount \$23,595.49 was used to provide passage for the destitute between 1874 and 1881. The Inman Line Steamship Company and the Erie Railroad received \$22,395.49 for their service. A total of \$1,200.00 was paid to the Red Star Line and the Pennsylvania Railroad to whom the Board switched their entire business after 1876.<sup>85</sup> Of the remaining \$16,888.67, the Polish Mennonites of Kansas, received \$11,767.01. Board of Guardian travel expenses accounted for \$542.48, expenditures for provisions for the needy while en route amounted to \$585.52, the colonies of Dakota borrowed \$3,246.60, and the poor in Manitoba were given \$282.50 and 100 English Pounds. The balance was used to cover miscellaneous expenses, as stationery, telegrams, and the like.<sup>86</sup>

The contributions of the Canadian Aid Committee totaled \$41,100 by October, 1876.<sup>87</sup> With this they substantially aided the successful settlement of 8,230 families in Manitoba. The amount contributed through the Executive Aid Committee of Pennsylvania is not known but this sum might easily have reached a higher figure than that contributed by either of the two above-mentioned committees.<sup>88</sup> However, the enumeration of governments of Canada and the United States played a conspicuous role comprehension of the actual aid and services presented to the immigrants by the native Mennonites. Much time and energy was spent to provide comfort and convenience to the travelers. Many homes were opened to lodge these people during the time while land for permanent settlement was being



selected. Many people contributed wholeheartedly and sacrificially to the success of the whole movement.

One must not succumb to the grave error of suggesting that the credit for the successful settlement should be bestowed upon the efforts of one man of the committee. Many people and many organizations contributed to its success. We have already sketched the part contributed by the three Mennonite aid committees: the Mennonite Board of Guardians, which operated in the Middle West, the Mennonite Aid Committee, of Canada, and the Executive Aid Committee, of Pennsylvania. Representatives of the governments of Canada and the United States played a conspicuous role in the drama of the immigration. The land agents of the western railroad companies aided the immigrants in no small way. Nevertheless, during the entire activity, the personality of John Funk constantly exhibited an understanding of and an appreciation for the situation, which, coupled with the dynamic energy with which he attacked the problem emphasizes the prominent part that his activity contributed to the final successful consummation of the project. *Herald of Truth* was the medium which most completely reached the American Mennonites at that time. Funk took full advantage of his position as editor of this paper and of his intimate knowledge of the Mennonite people to persuade them to take part in this project. Funk had been a native of Pennsylvania and maintained a wide and intimate acquaintance with all Mennonite leaders. This acquaintance made it possible for him to coordinate the work of the three Mennonite committees so that they cooperated in a manner which might otherwise have been impossible. His constant willingness to sacrifice his time, his resources, and his home life to accompany the delegates on their journeys, attend committee meetings in all sections of the country, and open his home for the comfort of his guests as well as his sincere understanding of and his almost unlimited patience with the conditions of the immigrants mark him as one of their outstanding friends. In 1908 Peter Jansen wrote to Funk concerning the past immigration and said, "I say it without any desire to flatter you that no one has done more, yes, I might say as much, for our people than yourself; and no one has served more unselfishly than you."<sup>89</sup>

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1. "From Germany," *Herald of Truth*, VII (March, 1870), p. 56.
  2. Reprint of an article from the *Gemeindeblatt*, *Herald of Truth*, VII (December, 1870), p. 193.
  3. Editorial, *Herald of Truth*, IX (August, 1872), p. 120.
  4. C. Henry Smith, *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites*, (Berne, Indiana, 1927), p. 49.
  5. Georg Leibbrandt, "The Emigration of the German Mennonites from Russia to the United States and Canada in 1873-1880," (I) *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, VI, (October, 1932), pp. 210-211.
  6. Leibbrandt, "The Emigration of the German Mennonites from Russia to the United States and Canada in 1873-1880," (II) *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, VII (Jan. 1933), p. 224.
  7. "The Mennonites in Russia," *Herald of Truth*, IX (June, 1872), p. 88.
  8. "The Mennonites in Russia," *Herald of Truth*, IX (July, 1872), p. 104.
  9. "The Mennonites in Russia, A Visit from There," *Herald of Truth*, IX August, 1872), p. 121.
  10. "The Russian Brethren," *Herald of Truth*, IX (November 1872), p. 168.
  11. "Our Trip to the West," *Herald of Truth*, IX (November, 1872), p. 170.
  12. John F. Funk, *Diary*, September, 1872.

13. "The Russian Brethren," *Herald of Truth*, IX (November, 1872), p. 168.
14. John F. Funk, *Autobiography*, Russian Immigration, p. 4, Archives of the Mennonite church, Goshen, Indiana.
15. "The Present Number," *Herald of Truth*, X (February, 1873), p. 40.
16. "Reduction of Fares," *Herald of Truth*, X (February, 1872), p. 24.
17. Funk, *Autobiography*, Russian Immigration, p. 1.
18. Leibbrandt, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, (January, 1933), p. 9.
19. "The Russian Deputation," *Herald of Truth*, X (May, 1873), p. 89; Smith, *Op cit.* p. 51.
20. Christian Krehbiel to Funk, May 12, 1873, *Funk Papers*
21. J. F. Funk, "Notes by the Way," *Herald of Truth*, X (August, 1873), pp. 137-188.
22. Leonhard Sudermann, *A Deputation's Journey from Russia to America*, translation by Elmer Swartzendruber, Wayland, Iowa, 1948, pp. 5, 7.
23. John F. Funk, "Notes by the Way," *Herald of Truth*, X, (August 1873), p. 139.
24. Sudermann, *Op. cit.* p. 12.
25. J. M. Hofer, "The Diary of Paul Tschetter, 1873," *IV Mennonite Quarterly Review*, (April, 1931), p. 204.
26. Funk, "Notes by the Way," *Herald of Truth*, X (September, 1873), p. 155.
27. Funk, "Notes by the Way," *Herald of Truth*, X (October, 1873), p. 169.
28. Funk, "Notes by the Way," *Herald of Truth*, X (November, 1873), p. 186.
29. Funk, "Notes by the Way," *Herald of Truth*, X (December, 1873) p. 202.
30. "Russian Deputations," *Herald of Truth*, X (July, 1873), p. 120.
31. Reprint of a letter, Jacob Leisy to John Funk, *Herald of Truth*, X (October, 1873), p. 166.
32. John F. Funk "Emigration of the Russian Mennonites," *Herald of Truth*, X (September, 1873), p. 153.
33. *Herald of Truth*, X (September and October, 1873), pp. 150-167.
34. Funk, "Aid for the Russian Brethren," *Herald of Truth*, X (October, 1873), p. 167.
35. *Minutes of the Indiana-Michigan Conference 1864-1928*, Scottsdale, (n.d.) p. 18.
36. "Aid for the Russians," *Herald of Truth*, X (November, 1873), p. 183.
37. "The Russian Emigrants," *Herald of Truth*, X (September, 1873), p. 152.
38. Funk, *Autobiography*, Russian Immigration, p. 4. Funk, *Diary*, January 5, 1874. On October 3, Funk accompanied Peters, Goerz and Schroeder to Chicago where they went to contact for lands with the Chicago and Western Railroad Company. On the 13th he accompanied a party of 77 to Chicago on their start west. During this time Warkentin was traveling throughout the west attempting to find land suitable for settlement for this group.
39. Funk, "The Mennonite Board of Guardians," *Herald of Truth*, XI (February, 1874), p. 19.
40. David Goerz and Funk, "Circular No. 1," *Herald of Truth*, XI (February, 1874), p. 18.
41. Funk, "Circular No. 2," *Herald of Truth*, XI (February, 1874), p. 19.
42. Leibbrandt, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, VII; pp. 29-30.

The terms from Hamburg were

to Atchison, Kansas	\$42.00
to Omaha, Nebraska	41.00
to St. Paul, Minnesota	41.00
to Sioux City, Iowa	42.00

This included a right to transport 20 cubic feet of baggage for each adult free on the ocean. The railroad permitted 150 pounds of baggage per adult. Children 1 to 15 were to travel at half fare during the entire trip. Those 5 to 12 were permitted half fare on the railroads. All infants below the age of one were permitted free passage.

43. The first of these reports was printed in the *Herald of Truth* XI (January, 1874), p. 10.
44. Funk, *Autobiography*, Russian Emigration, p. 5.
45. Funk, "Report," *Herald of Truth*, XI (February, 1874) p. 19; see also Christian Krehbiel, "Report to the Conference," *Herald of Truth*, XIII (December, 1876), p. 198.
46. Warkentin to Funk, February 12, 1874, *Funk Papers*.
47. Amos Herr to John Funk, March 29, 1874, *Funk Papers*.
48. "The Russian Aid in Pennsylvania," *Herald of Truth*, XI (May, 1874), p. 88.
49. Funk, *Diary*, May 6, 1874,

The terms from Antwerp were:

to Yankton, Dakota	\$37.00
to Sioux City, Iowa	36.00
to Omaha, Nebraska	36.00
to Atchison, Kansas	35.00
to St. Paul, Minnesota	35.00

50. "The Russian Aid in Pennsylvania," *Herald of Truth*, XI (May, 1874), p. 88.
51. J. Y. Shantz to John Funk, April 9, 1874, *Funk Papers*.
52. Funk, *Diary*, April 16, 1874; Francis F. Funk, Agent to the Pennsylvania Railroad, to John Funk, April 24 and April 25, 1874, *Funk Papers*.

53. John Funk to Leonhard Sudermann, June 20, 1874, **Funk Papers**.
54. John Funk to an unidentified Mennonite leader, 1874.
55. The names of the donors and the amount donated were printed in each issue of the **Herald of Truth**. This served as a receipt for the donation.
56. John F. Funk, **Autobiography**, p. 5.
57. "Report of the Canadian Aid Committee," **Herald of Truth**, XI (January, 1874), p. 10.
58. Reprint of the petition which was signed by Peter Richert, Benjamin Unruh, Peter Unruh, Andreas Unruh, Abraham Siebert, Henry Dirks, Benjamin Deckert, and David Wedel, **Herald of Truth**, XI (February, 1874), p. 39.
59. Board of Guardian Account Book, p. 35, Archives of the Mennonite church, Goshen, Indiana.
60. David Goerz to Funk, March 22, 1877, **Funk Papers**.
61. "The Emigration Movement," **Herald of Truth**, XI (May, 1874) p. 88. Only \$1,327.50 of this amount was paid to the Inman Line. The main Canadian immigration was handled by the Allen Line.
62. "The Russian Aid Fund," **Herald of Truth**, XI (September, 1874), p. 152.
63. Funk, **Autobiography**, Russian Immigration, p. 8.
64. Funk, **Diary**, July 20, 1874.
65. Carbon copy of an untitled article by Funk, **Funk Papers**.
66. Funk, **Diary**, November 13, 1874.
67. "Report of the Mennonite Board of Guardians," **Herald of Truth**, XI (November, 1874), p. 177.
68. "Another Way to Aid our Russian Brethren," **Herald of Truth**, XI (February, 1874), p. 41.
69. Warkentin to Funk, Jan. 18, 1875. Archives of the Mennonite church, Goshen, Indiana.
70. "The Russian Aid," **Herald of Truth**, XII (February, 1875), p. 25.
71. Isaac Kilmer, "The Settlement of the families without means at Florence in Kansas," **Herald of Truth**, XII (May, 1875), p. 73. The members of the Committee were Peter Unruh, President; Bernhard Warkentin, Secretary; David S. Holdeman, Treasurer; Christian Hirschler and Benjamin Unruh, Business Agents.
72. "Emigration and Settlement of the Russian Brethren," **Herald of Truth**, XII (May, 1875), p. 72.
73. "The Kansas Committee," **Herald of Truth**, XII (August, 1875), p. 157.
74. Summers, Goerz, Peter Unruh, and Samuel Koehn, "Report on the Kansas Committee," **Herald of Truth**, XIII (July, 1876), p. 121.
75. David Goerz, "Final Receipts of the Kansas Local Relief Committee," **Herald of Truth**, XIII (July, 1876), p. 122. The \$1,000 contributed earlier by the Executive Aid Committee of Pennsylvania was not handled by the Kansas Local Relief Committee.
76. Funk, **Diary**, November 1, 1875.
77. David Goerz to John Funk, March 22, 1877, **Funk Papers**.
78. Funk, "Notes on the Conference," **Herald of Truth**, XII (December, 1875), p. 203.
79. Funk, "Notes on the Conference," **Herald of Truth**, XIII (January, 1876), p. 9.
80. Jacob Y. Shantz, "Conditions of the Brethren in Manitoba," **Herald of Truth**, XIV (January, 1877), p. 9.
81. Funk, **Diary**, July 2, 1878.
82. Andreas Schrag, "Acknowledgement," **Herald of Truth**, XIV (October, 1882), p. 313.
83. L. E. Zimmerman, "A Call for Help," **Herald of Truth**, XXI, (April, 1884), p. 122.
84. Zimmerman, "Report of the Nebraska Aid Committee," **Herald of Truth**, XXII (February, 1885), p. 55.
85. John Shenk to John Funk, April 18, 1876. **Funk Papers**. Shenk mentions here that Krehbiel and Goerz had agreed to switching business to the Red Star Line. The reasons for this were: 1. The Red Star Line gave better rates than the Inman Line. 2. The Inman Line had an agreement with the other Liverpool Lines to transport no one for less than the advertised rates.
86. Board of Guardian Account Book.
87. "Report of Letters from J. Y. Shantz," **Herald of Truth**, XIII (October, 1876), p. 168; "A Report of the Mennonite Aid Committee of Canada," **Herald of Truth**, (June, 1875), gave the amount contributed to June, 1875, as being \$25,484.62. The original of this report is in the Archives of the Waterloo Historical Society, Waterloo, Ontario.
88. H. S. Bender, "Our Mennonite Church Archives," **Gospel Herald**, XXXII (June 15, 1939), p. 234, relates that a bagful of priceless records of the Executive Aid Committee of Pennsylvania had been burned.
89. Peter Jansen to John F. Funk, April 15, 1908, **Funk Papers**.



# Jacob Y. Shantz

## THE MENNONITE IMMIGRATION TO MANITOBA

By Melvin Gingerich

During a period of thirty years, Jacob Y. Shantz of Waterloo County, Ontario, made twenty-seven journeys to Manitoba.<sup>1</sup> When he took his first journey to Fort Garry in 1872, he hired a horse and buggy and drove several hundred miles west of the Red River where he saw only three white men in several weeks. On his last trip in 1907, he saw prosperous communities in which thousands of Mennonites were living happily. Jacob Y. Shantz deserves great credit for the success of these settlements. On the day of his death, October 28, 1909, the Berlin (Kitchener) paper said of him, "He had thus been instrumental in having thousands of people of this sect (Mennonites) becoming colonists in this district (Manitoba) and thus settling up the country, aiding in its reclamation from a wild and unimproved district and converting it to the uses of civilization."

Jacob Y. Shantz was born May 2, 1822, on the family homestead just south of the present First Mennonite Church of Kitchener, in Waterloo Township, Waterloo County, Ontario. His family came to Pennsylvania from Switzerland in 1737 and his father, Jacob Shantz, moved to Ontario from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in 1810. To Jacob and his wife Maria nee Yost were born eight sons and two daughters, of whom Jacob Y. was the eighth child.<sup>2</sup>

Shantz operated the 448-acre family farm from shortly after his first marriage in 1843 till the place was sold in 1883. The saw mill on the farm led him into the building and constructing business. In his farming and in his milling he used improved methods and machinery, importing perhaps the first reaping machine into Canada. As the largest employer in the area, he refused to follow the prevalent custom of furnishing beer or strong drink to his workers. Older men warned him that he would be unable to procure laborers but he maintained his principles and obtained the best workers. In addition to his other activities, he furnished firewood for the Grand Trunk Railroad and for factories in the town. He constantly added timber to his holdings, and in addition owned the largest maple grove in the vicinity, tapping over four hundred trees yearly. Interested in fruit raising, he had three orchards on his farm.

One of the first important business structures in Berlin was the Canadian Block, built and owned by him. Deeply interested in the welfare of the working man, he built many houses for workers and sold them on terms that enabled the poorest to buy. It was Shantz who proposed a farmer's market for Berlin. The town council finally decided to build a town hall and gave Shantz the contract for the structure. The basement was used for a public market, the first story for a post office, council chamber and public library, and the second story for a convention hall. Shantz's proposals for the management of the farmer's market were adopted and followed for almost sixty years. His son stated that "Many citizens claimed

that this market was an important factor in the substantial and rapid development of the city. . . .”

Shantz also promoted industries in Berlin. He assisted in the starting of a felt boot and shoe factory and a foundry. His chief industrial venture, however, was the ivory button industry. Although during part of its early history, the industry did not produce profits, Shantz kept it in operation because he felt a responsibility to give employment to the young men and women of the community. In its second decade, however, the enterprise became a profitable one, and it came to be a leader in the field, having a reputation for good quality. Out of the Shantz Button Factory has grown the Dominion Button Manufacturers, Limited.

The varied agricultural and business experiences of Jacob Y. Shantz gave him valuable training for what was to be his most important contribution to Canada. Ernst Correll ably summarized Schantz's contribution in these words: “Foremost, from the very beginning was Jacob Yost Shantz (1822-1909). Without his energetic devotion, the Manitoba settlement of ever growing numbers of families and congregations of Mennonites could not have progressed as it did.”<sup>3</sup>

During 1872 the Canadian Government carried on negotiations with Mennonite authorities concerning their proposed migration to America. William Hespeler, an Ontario German, acting as a special immigration agent, was sent to South Russia, after which he reported important news on prospective Mennonite immigration, including rumors of proposed trips of Russian Mennonite representatives to America. The Canadian Government, hearing of Russian Mennonite visitors in the states, attempted to locate them. It is at this point that Jacob Y. Shantz first entered the unfolding drama. The government in October, 1872, requested John Shantz unable to go to Ottawa to confer on Mennonite immigration. John Shantz was unable to go to Ottawa and suggested that Jacob Y. Shantz be invited. A few days later Jacob Y. telegraphed Ottawa that he had located the Mennonite delegate (Bernhard Warkentin) in Elkhart, Indiana, and that he would be in Ottawa with the delegate shortly.<sup>4</sup> The result of these contacts with the government was a trip of investigation to Manitoba by Jacob Y. Shantz and Bernhard Warkentin. In early November, 1872, they left on their journey, going by way of Minnesota and Dakota, and arriving in Winnipeg on November 19. In a letter to the Minister of Agriculture, dated February 28, 1873, Shantz wrote, “I herewith enclose to you a brief narrative of my journey to Manitoba, and my opinions respecting that province. The readers of this report may rest assured that it contains a true and impartial statement of what I saw and learned there.” The *Narrative of a journey to Manitoba*, by J. Y. Shantz, published by the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, became a history-making pamphlet. Correll states that the *Shantz Narrative* “was reproduced in all sorts of editions running to several hundreds of thousands” and it even appeared in French. In August, 1873, the Department of Agriculture inquired if he wished to make any changes in the *Narrative* in the light of his most recent trip to Manitoba when he had escorted a Russian Mennonite delegation to that province. He replied that he could scarcely add anything “worthwhile mentioning.”

The *Narrative* recounted the trip to Manitoba, described Winnipeg and other settlements, listed five inducements in favor of Manitoba, discussed cost of transportation, the Indians, the climate, stock raising, and fruit culture, and gave information to prospective settlers on the amount of capital required and advice to those immigrants from Europe. Shantz's narrative required nineteen pages. The remaining twelve pages of the pamphlet gave the Dominion Lands Act, additional information concerning Manitoba, and several testimonials. "There was hardly an official or semi-official publication on Manitoba colonization prospects which did not from that time on over a long period carry at least a major portion of the original *Narrative*," states Correll.<sup>6</sup>

Among the first Mennonites to arrive from Russia were Cornelius Jansen and family who first settled in Berlin, Ontario, but later located in Nebraska. While in Canada, the Jansens had many contacts with the Shantz family. When the official delegation of Russian Mennonites soon after came to America to investigate lands, Shantz accompanied them, showing them Manitoba. The work of Shantz and his favorable report were influential in persuading eight thousand or almost half of the total Russian Mennonite immigrants to settle in Canada during the next decade. The first of these, a party of several hundred, coming in 1873, were temporarily cared for in Waterloo County, Ontario, until arrangements had been completed in Manitoba for them. From the time of the first investigation trip, Shantz devoted much time to the Mennonite migration. He established a personal credit of \$100,000 at a local bank for his button industry and other enterprises. "A large part of this credit he frequently used, in case of emergency for the development of the Northwest, and also when private contributions and government funds, together, were not sufficient or available for the immediate needs of so large an immigration," wrote his son, Moses B. Shantz.

To keep down the cost of transportation of the immigrants, Shantz made a number of trips to New York and Montreal in order to obtain the most advantageous terms. By arranging to have the immigrants travel in large groups, and by guaranteeing the collection of fares, Shantz was able to obtain very low rates for their passage, wrote his son who was stationed at Toronto to meet the immigrant trains and to make an accounting with their leaders for their entire fare from Hamburg to Manitoba. The largest single amount thus collected from any one group was more than \$10,000. These sums were deposited in the Berlin bank awaiting final settlement with the transportation companies.

It was a gigantic task to make the careful preparations necessary to keep the immigrants from suffering. On returning from one of his early trips to the west, he learned that the government planned to send one party of Mennonites to Manitoba by way of the Dawson Route from Port Arthur to Winnipeg. As this route was suitable only for hunters and trappers, Shantz protested and finally an order came from Ottawa, "Do as you see fit." It was always a source of satisfaction to Shantz to know that on this occasion he was instrumental in forestalling a possibly disastrous trip.





The Western and Eastern Reserves investigated by the delegation became prosperous Mennonite settlements.

Many of his friends were displeased that he should devote his energies to what seemed to them to be a foolhardy enterprise. They blamed him for writing a report that very likely would be instrumental in sending thousands into the Northwest. Said a friend to Shantz's son, "Those people will get up there by the thousands and probably will either starve or freeze to death and your father will be responsible." The son replied that his father was in Manitoba at that time to see that such calamities would be averted. When he was told of this conversation after having come back from a several months stay in Manitoba he remarked in effect, "It is not altogether pleasant to have people say or think that, when one makes such sacrifices for his country and the welfare of other people. I hope such a calamity will never occur but if it should, I doubt if I would be responsible. I am responsible for telling the facts to the best of my knowledge and ability. My belief, however, is that regardless of what people say, the

great country, Manitoba and the Northwest, will some day be the greatest grain country in the world."

As he traveled about, he placed orders for implements and supplies where he could obtain the best terms. On one occasion he carried as much as \$5,000 with him in a leather satchel although usually he used drafts. At one time he placed a \$6,000 order for plows with the Oliver Plow Company and on another occasion a \$12,000 order for wagons with the Studebaker Wagon Company. A \$26,000 order for provisions was paid by his personal draft on the J. Y. Shantz and Sons, Button Manufacturers, as were the other accounts named above. These were charged to his personal account. The implements and supplies were placed in charge of group leaders who distributed them to the members of their villages. Shantz arranged a plan of payment that postponed the first payments for several years. It should be added that the banks cooperated in making this credit available through Shantz, which proved both their confidence in him and their faith in Manitoba.

When in order to settle poor Russian Mennonite immigrants on government land grants in Manitoba the Canadian government in 1875 extended a loan of \$100,000, a loan which was guaranteed by the Ontario Mennonites, Jacob Y. Shantz was placed in charge of applying the money towards the purchase of equipment for the new settlers. The government informed its immigration agent, J. E. Klotz in Hamburg, on April 29, 1875, "I am authorized to inform you . . . Mr. J. Y. Shantz is recognized by the Department as being duly authorized to furnish you from time to time with directions as to the aid to be given to Mennonite Immigrants out of the loan afforded by the Government to that Society."

This society was the Ontario "Russian Mennonite Aid Committee" of which J. Y. Shantz was secretary and treasurer. Besides acting as the agent of the government and guaranteeing the government loan, it also received loans from Mennonites for the purpose of assisting the settlement of the immigrants. Shantz lived to see the day when all these loans were repaid. Money borrowed from Mennonites in Canada was repaid, with the exception of those loans for which the lenders declined to accept payment. And the entire loan was repaid to the government. "On the twenty-seventh and last journey he made to the Northwest in his eighty-fifth year, he completed the final settlement of his accounts with those who regarded him as their benefactor," wrote Moses B. Shantz. The government in grateful appreciation to Shantz for having collected the entire amount with interest then gave him a draft of \$4,000 for his service.

In his later years he became interested in the undeveloped lands west of Manitoba and was active in promoting settlements in those provinces. His friends could not understand why in his old age he promoted settlements in such unpromising territory but he predicted that the Canadian mountains would produce water power, minerals, and timber and that a thousand hills would soon be covered with waving grain. Flour mills, he said, would soon adorn these prairies. In later years a flour mill was built only forty yards from the place where he stood when he made this prophetic utterance.

Shantz was an impressive figure. Six feet tall, with an erect carriage and massive frame, there was no spare flesh on his body. His voice had a deep, organ-like note that people would not forget. He was apparently in good health up to within an hour of his death, although in his later years his eyesight was impaired. A photograph of Shantz in the prime of life shows him with a beard and mustache. A friend said of him, "Shantz has been like the primeval white pine of the market square, deeply rooted, strong of character foundation, 120 feet solid clear timber, full of sap and vigor; very few knots, in fact the clean stuff."

His schooling had been limited to a grade school education in an old frame building east of the present First Mennonite Church. At the age of twelve he joined the (Old) Mennonite church but later, as was true of a considerable number of other Ontario Mennonites who were interested in more progressive methods of church activity, he joined the Mennonite Brethren in Christ church. He was always active in religious work and reforms and helped promote the first Sunday school in the county and was said to have been the first Sunday school teacher in the county. For some time he served on the publication board of the M. B. C. church. His son stated that to the end of his life Shantz was a loyal member of the Mennonite church (M. B. C.), in "full accord with the general great principles of Peace and Good Will." He never sought publicity for himself, his favorite texts being: "Blessed are the meek," and "Blessed are the peace makers." He never sought public office but was a public school trustee, a position which he held for thirty-five years in succession. In a mass meeting of the public-spirited people of Berlin, in 1882, Shantz was unanimously elected mayor of the city. He, however, resigned the position, preferring not to serve his fellow citizens in this manner.

Shantz was married three times, in 1843 to Barbara Biehn, in 1853 to Nancy Brubacher, and in 1871 to Sarah Shuh. Two sons and three daughters were born to the first marriage, and three sons and four daughters to the second. He is buried in the East End Cemetery of Kitchener (Berlin).

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1. Much of the information in this article is taken from an unpublished biography of Jacob Y. Shantz, written by his son Moses B. Shantz. A copy is deposited in the Waterloo Historical Society Library, Kitchener, Ontario.
  2. The chief facts of Jacob Y. Shantz's life are given in Dr. H. M. Bowman's biography of Shantz in the *Twelfth Annual Report of the Waterloo Historical Society*, 1924, Kitchener, Ontario.
  3. Ernst Correll, "Mennonite Immigration Into Manitoba, Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, July, 1937.
  4. Moses B. Shantz in his father's biography states that P. E. W. Meyer, editor of the *Daily News* of Berlin, had written to the Government at Ottawa suggesting that Mennonites be induced to settle the Northwest Territory. "A favorable reply was received inquiring whether he could suggest a man suitable for such an undertaking. Mr. Meyer suggested J. Y. Shantz as a man of proper experience and reliability for such a purpose. Thus it came about that J. Y. Shantz was invited to come to Ottawa for a conference."
  5. A copy of Shantz's Narrative is deposited in the Goshen College Mennonite Historical Library and a microfilm copy in the Bethel College Historical Library. The first part of the Narrative is reprinted in the January, 1948, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.



# The Founding of Gnadenau

By J. A. Wiebe

(Editor's note: This account was printed in the chapter, "Colonizing the Prairies" on the pages 119-124 of the book, *The Story of the Santa Fe* by G. D. Bradley (Gorham Press, 1920). According to the author the account must have been written in 1912 upon request of Alex E. Case, a land agent of Marion, Kansas. To the knowledge of the editor this report has never appeared in print except in the above-mentioned book now out of print.

The account by J. A. Wiebe speaks for itself and is a vivid description of the hardships and joys of the pioneer days and the problems and the faith of the pioneers. As to the style of the narrative it must be assumed that Wiebe did not write it in the English language but that it was translated from the German rather literally. Whether the original account is still in existence is unknown. With a few exceptions where the meaning was obscured by the sentence construction the following is a literal reprint from the above-mentioned book.)

As Mr. Alex. E. Case requested me to say something of our people's arrival in America, and especially to Marion County, Kansas, I will comply with his request.

We left our dear homes in Russia, May 30, 1874, and arrived after a trip of many hardships, at Peabody, August 16, and soon became acquainted with Mr. Case and Mr. Billings, because they assisted us very much with our twelve sections of land which we bought of the Santa Fe Railroad Company.

But now comes the question why we left Russia and came to America, as it brought with it many hardships; so I will answer briefly and modestly that it was conviction. Our grandfathers came from Holland to Germany, and from Germany to Russia and here received a privilege that they and their descendants should be exempt from military duty, with the condition, to pay low taxes to the Crown. Also our fathers were to be model farmers, lay out neat villages, plant gardens, and be a good example in agriculture, in sheep- and cattle-raising and so forth. But after a course of 100 years this privilege was annuled or abolished, and in the year 1870 Czar Alexander gave orders in his empire to the effect that every one whom the new law did not please and who would not or could not go under the militia, was at liberty to emigrate within ten years with his full property, if he chose to hold fast to his fathers' faith. And this seemed to be so urgent that we sent deputies to Petersburg to pray for longer freedom; however, all seemed useless; instead of freedom; with no exception, military duty for every one, after the expiration of ten years. As that was against Jesus' teaching, and against our Godly convictions, as Jesus says to Peter: "Put up thy sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," Matt. 5 and Rom. 12, we sent several elders and deputies to America, to see if the newspaper reports, as also in private letters, were true, that in America full freedom of conscience prevailed. When the deputies returned after three or four months absence they confirmed this, and so we prepared for emigration and applied for passports, because we wanted to emigrate from Russia as honest people, and we began to sell our property. When Czar Alexander learned of this, he sent General von Todleben to the Molotschna colony, who requested that all emigrants come to church, first at Halbstadt and again at Alexanderwohl in Elder Jacob Buller's great

church, and so very many came together. Then General von Todleben in his full military uniform stepped before the great assembly, and looked about with the question: "Are all these emigrants?" then he began to speak, loud and distinctly, in pure German: "His Majesty, Czar Alexander, has sent me to you and I am to tell you he loves you, you are worthy to dwell in this empire, why do you have it in mind to emigrate? One hundred years your fathers have been in this land, you enjoy it here, you have everything arranged so well, why will you emigrate? You have fine schools, fine churches, fine houses and gardens, you need not work yourselves, the work is being done without you, all you have to do is to look after the work, you can hire Russian laborers at low wages. Why will you emigrate? When you come to America you will have to dig trees, weed the roots and break the prairie and do all your work yourself. Here you have it as fine as you wish."

And so the high official worked very hard against emigration; he was faithful and true in his duty, and later made an offer, that those who did not like to serve in military duty, and take weapons, they could do sanitary service, nurse the sick, build bridges, or make plantations, that is, take care of woods and forests. The latter has been chosen by those remaining. When a young man is 21 years old he has to go to the lot, and if found fit has to serve several years in the forestry service. But as we had already disposed of all our property I presented a petition to the General, we thanked his Majesty the Czar for the grants we had enjoyed in Russia and prayed for dismissal, which General von Todleben promised. We received our passports, and could leave our earthly dearly loved homes, as well as many friends, parents, brothers and sisters, May 30. July 15 we arrived in New York. A great portion of our fellow travelers went from Liverpool, England, to Manitoba, and another portion went from Hamburg, Germany, direct to Dakota and Minnesota. Therefore we have emigrated with the Czar's approbation, and as faithful and obedient as we have been in Russia, so far as God's word and our conscience allowed us, so we have had a mind to be in America, and want to seek the peace of the land, as long as our fathers' principle is not touched. We thank God that we could live in this dearly beloved America these 38 years, according to our faith and principle, and that we can live our faith if we have a mind to do so.

From New York we journeyed to Elkhart, Indiana, where we arrived one Sunday morning. We knew John F. Funk through the newspaper, *Herold der Wahrheit*; he provided an empty house. Those of us that had no room in this house were provided for in the church. Elder Funk had announced that people from Russia had arrived, so many of the poor were furnished with provisions. In the afternoon I was invited to preach in the church to many hearers. Here our people lived for a number of weeks, several of our brethren received work. Frank R. Jansen and I were sent ahead to look for a suitable place for settlement. We traveled all over Nebraska and Kansas. In Nebraska we were afraid of the deep wells which had to be drilled and cost much money; our people did not have much money and they were used to dug wells, so we decided for Kansas where we found the wells shallow. C. B. Schmidt drove with us all over Kansas as far as Great Bend. On a hot August day we ate our dinner under a tree on section 13

(Marion County) on the South Cottonwood river, where Peter Harms now lives. The heat was great. Agent Schmidt looked at his hands full of blisters, saying, "I believe I have done my part." Secretly he feared we might yet decide for Nebraska.

When finally we had bought the land, 12 sections, we let our people follow us. Agent Schmidt offered to go for them to Elkhart, personally, while we were making preparations for their arrival. We hurried, namely to get ready with everything before the winter. I rented an empty store, bought a stove, table, two horses and a wagon. While we waited for our families it was very hot.

I came into great temptation on account of the high winds, everything was dry and withered. The year before grasshoppers had taken all. I realized that as soon as our people would be here, they would be discouraged, seeing the wind and dust sweep through the streets of Peabody. All of a sudden I became afraid of the future whether we would make our living here or not. The great responsibility of having selected a place of settlement for so many poor people rested heavily upon me. In my great grief I sat down on the steps; I thought of the poor families with their children; we had no provisions, no friend in the new world, the winter was nigh at the door, we were wanting of dwellings, provisions, agricultural implements and seed; everything was high in price, some of our people were old, weak and sick, the future seemed very gloomy; there were also no prospects of rain, only windy, dusty and very hot, all this fell over me, so I could not help myself but let my tears flow freely. While I was thus sitting on the threshold weeping, Mrs. Seybold came to me and asked me: "Mr. Wiebe, what ails you?" I told her my grief, then she began to console me. She pointed to the street, saying: "Do you see those stones? They are sometimes entirely under water, it can rain very hard here, and it soon will rain. Oh! Mr. Wiebe, be of good cheer, such people as you will (even) make their living!" And so it was, it soon began to rain.

On a Saturday night our people arrived at Peabody. Sunday we rode out upon our land. John Fast, Sr., who already lived here, came with a conveyance to get people, also Wilhelm Ewert, Mrs. Peter Funk and John Ratzlaff sent teams. I took my family in my own wagon; it was the seventeenth day of August when we rode from Peabody onto the land, 14 miles northwest. I had loaded some lumber and utensils, and my family on top. So we rode in the deep grass to the little stake that marked the spot I had chosen. When we reached the same I stopped. My wife asked me, "Why do you stop?" I said, "We are to live here." Then she began to weep. Several families moved into Mr. Funk's barn, where soon after old Mother Abraham Cornelson died—the first death among our people in America. We built light board shanties, dug wells, in three weeks it began to rain; there came a heavy rain. We rented some plowed land from English neighbors, who lived on sections 12 and 14. Seed wheat was 70 cents in price, corn was high priced, there had been no crop that year, it was \$1.25; potatoes were \$2 a bushel. The first sowed wheat brought a bountiful harvest the next year. We had not sowed very much, but that little brought much. That gave us courage.

Since we settled on section 11—range 2, Risley township, the seventeenth



of August, 1874, we fared well, although at the beginning we were very poor. We originally bought 12 sections of land of the railroad company in Risley township, later Liberty township on ten years' credit; we had to pay down some, and the dear friends and general agent C. B. Schmidt, and Case and Billings, have treated us nicely and faithfully. We were all poor people, many families owed their traveling expenses. They had to go in debt for land, oxen, plow, farm wagon and even their sod house; they had to have provisions for a year; there was no chance of earning something, so they had to go in debt for that too, there was no other way than to borrow money, but where? We were strangers, had no friends here, only Bernhard Warkentin of Halstead knew us from Russia, and he helped us through Elder Christian Krehbiel with a loan of a thousand dollars, when those were distributed, it was said: "Brother Wiebe, we also need oxen and a plow to break prairie." Then Cornelius Jansen of Nebraska, well known Consul Jansen, loaned us one thousand dollars; when these were distributed, it was said, "Brother Wiebe, we have to buy provisions for a year, and some lumber to build houses," then the Elder Wilhelm Ewert loaned us one thousand dollars. Then the time of paying for the land came, so Jacob Funk loaned us one thousand dollars. So we sat in our poor sod houses, some two feet deep in the ground, the walls of sod, the roof of long reed grass, that reached into the prairie. In part we were glad to have progressed so far before the winter, but we did not think of the great danger we were in, as we lived in the middle of the prairie in knee-high grass. But there we had a dear English neighbor on section 12, John Risley. The good man saw in what great danger we were, because we lived some twenty-five families on one section of land, all in a row as in a village. The dear friend, John Risley, had seen a prairie fire in the west, so he went for his five pair of oxen and big plow, and plowed five or eight times around the village with his five yoke of oxen, and brotherly told us: "Now, dear people, burn off the grass between the furrows, else all you have may burn for you," and we followed his advice, thanks to the Lord.

The dear heavenly Father has a watchful eye, and has looked down on us with favor; we have had several good crops, and have repaid, and when the crops failed—especially in the year 1879—grasshoppers came, and we could not make our payments at the appointed time. But the company had pity and patience with us. The dear Elder Ewert to whom I had complained, that our brethren could not hold their terms, said: "With nice buggies you are not riding yet, and two-story houses you are not building yet, so we are obliged to wait."

Elder Ewert lived temporarily in a barn, and rode in a large farm wagon with his delicate wife. He made little do, and helped other poor people. We have, thanks be to God, repaid everything; it is however, to be regretted that some ventured into so much debt, and since then gave their farms to the company.

I am old now and will soon leave this world, and I pity the next generation. They no longer learn to ride with oxen nor to plow with the handplow, but instead everything goes high out. Instead of getting along with oxen, they have carriages or automobiles, though they will stick deep in debt.

# The Mennonite Pioneer

By Elmer F. Suderman

Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike have made but little use of Mennonite pioneer materials in their literature and Mennonites themselves have much less use of the materials than non-Mennonites. Mennonites of continental Europe and Mennonites of the eastern United States have received more attention from the literary world than the Mennonite pioneer in the western prairie states and provinces. The reason for this, of course, is quite obvious; for both the Mennonites of Europe and the Mennonites of the East have been settled in their respective communities much longer than the Mennonites of the prairies, who have been here for only seventy-five years. Furthermore, European and eastern Mennonites live near communities where culture is more highly developed and where more authors are available to observe them. On the prairie non-Mennonites and Mennonites alike have had little time for literary activities; they have been too busy conquering the elements.

The Mennonite pioneer, however, has not been entirely neglected in literature. At the time of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the coming of the Mennonites to the prairie states and provinces it is appropriate that we consider the Mennonite pioneer as he appears in both Mennonite and non-Mennonite literature. To discuss briefly the literature which uses the life and times of the Mennonite pioneer of the prairie states and the Canadian provinces is the purpose of this paper. Limits of space will make it impossible to discuss all such works; consequently, only those of major importance will be considered. A detailed analysis of the major works will, of course, be impossible. It will, therefore, be possible to state only briefly the content and purpose of the work and to show how the materials concerning the Mennonite pioneer are used.

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The most noteworthy and extensive use of Mennonite pioneer materials is to be found in the novel. One of the earliest novels using a pioneer Mennonite setting and characters is *Quitt*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1891 and written by the distinguished German author, Theodor Fontane. *Quitt* is the story of Lehnert Menz, a poor youth with a self-righteous feeling, who acquits himself so well in the war that he wins the iron cross. However, his neighbor, the warden Opitz, succeeds in belittling Lehnert's accomplishments and in depreciating his activities to the authorities. Lehnert cannot forget the insult, and the two hate each other more and more until finally Lehnert murders Opitz. By a miracle Lehnert escapes to America, followed by his troubled conscience. For six years Lehnert lives in the northern and western part of the United States. He makes and loses a fortune in gold in California, attempts to go East, but is forced by illness and accident to stop at the

Mennonite Indian Mission at Darlington in what was then Indian Territory and is now Oklahoma. Lehnert finds a kind asylum with the Mennonite elder, Obadiah Hornbostel, and here he comes to clear understanding of his condition. At the Indian mission Lehnert is impressed by the Mennonite emphasis on the necessity of an inner change and by Obadiah's preaching about the damning consequences of murder and the necessity of atonement for past misdeeds. Lehnert is so overcome by a song of Ruth, the daughter of Obadiah with whom he has fallen in love, that he is moved to confess his past sins to Obadiah and join the Mennonite church where he finds peace and comfort. Lehnert determines to perform some heroic deed to show himself worthy of Ruth's love; but before an opportunity presents itself, he falls from a cliff when he is out searching for Toby, the son of Obadiah, who has seemingly come to some harm while out on a hunting expedition. Death comes to Lehnert before he can be rescued. Alone and knowing that death is inevitable. Lehnert, in a note written in his own blood, expresses the hope that his sins will be forgiven and that he thereby becomes "quitt."

*Quitt* has received considerable attention from Mennonite reviewers. C. H. Wedel in a series of reviews of *Quitt*, appearing in *Monatsblatter aus Bethel College*,<sup>2</sup> is quite severe in his criticism. In "Die Grundidee des *Quitt*" the reviewer objects to Obadiah's final conclusion in regard to Lehnert's death, a conclusion which holds that Lehnert's death was necessary to atone for his own sins.

With the main ethical idea of the book—that man's salvation comes through his own good deeds, that man through his good works can atone for his past misdeeds, that is, become "quitt"—the reviewer has no sympathy, for he feels that Lehnert's sacrifice of his life for Toby constitutes *Selbsterloesung*, a popular idea but directly contrary to the fundamental Christian idea of redemption through the blood of Christ.

In other articles the reviewer criticizes the setting of Fontane's pioneer Mennonite mission and calls the characterization of Obadiah a misrepresentation, and objects to the description of a mission festival and the religious activities at the mission station. The descriptions are, he says, anything but a true representation of the facts.

For another critic of *Quitt*, Mrs. Elizabeth H. Bender,<sup>3</sup> the most amazing thing about the novel is the excellent and authentic picture of Mennonite home life portrayed in the Hornbostel family. The atmosphere of the home has a typical flavor. Religion, while it is a practical thing, is made to permeate every corner of the life of the members of the family. Indeed, Mrs. Bender feels that the Mennonite atmosphere is an idealized one, and that Obadiah is an almost perfect Mennonite leader. His flaws, if he has any, are toned down, and the ideal aspects of his character are emphasized. He runs the household with authority, but is kind. He believes in hard work. Mrs. Bender concludes that Fontane took great pains to give an authentic and sympathetic portrayal of the daily life of Mennonites, their sober piety, their tolerance toward members of other religious groups, and their interest in practical problems and progressive agriculture.

Mrs. Bender, however, feels that Fontane is in serious error with re-



spect to some of the fundamental Mennonite religious tenets. Her primary objection is to Fontane's solution of the ethical problem, which is based primarily upon his own fatalism and, as far as religious belief is concerned, at best makes use of the retributive justice of the Old Testament; it has nothing in common with the New Testament position of Mennonitism, and from the Mennonite point of view his solution is therefore no solution at all.

Another interesting problem, but one which need not concern us here, is how Fontane, who had never crossed the ocean, succeeded in depicting as accurately and sympathetically as he did pioneer Mennonite characters and pioneer Mennonite conditions in America. For those who are interested in pursuing this question farther it would be pointed out that a valuable study of this question has been made by A. J. F. Zieglschmid.<sup>4</sup>

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A more recent German novel using the Mennonite pioneer is Otto Schrag's *The Locusts*,<sup>5</sup> published in 1943. Like Fontane, Schrag is not a Mennonite. He was born in Germany of an American mother and a German father. Under Hitler he left Germany for Luxemburg. From Luxemburg he went to Belgium, where he was captured and sent to a concentration camp in the southern part of France. He escaped and in 1941 he came to the United States as a refugee. *The Locusts* was written soon after in the German language. It was translated into English by Richard Winston.

*The Locusts* makes use of Mennonite materials only incidentally. Various groups and individuals—German immigrants, prospectors, a prostitute, two bone pickers, a cowboy, a Cheyenne school teacher, some money lenders, a peddler, a preacher, and a settlement of Mormons—share the scene with the Mennonites. The main character of the book, Jeremiah Kentrup, is a Mormon, not a Mennonite.

The action of *The Locusts* is slight. A large number of diverse kinds of people with little or nothing in common are introduced at various places in the western part of the United States. In Part I, "Before the Story Starts," seven different groups of people are scattered over the large area comprising Kansas, Arkansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and Idaho. The Mennonites, who have just arrived from Russia, are in Topeka, waiting impatiently to move to their new lands in central Kansas.

In Part II, "The Story," Schrag, with some skill, brings all of these characters together in the village of Gnadenau, which the Mennonites have settled. Before he takes the reader to the Gnadenau settlement, however, Schrag tells the story of the inception of the locusts in the Mormon community in Idaho. Jeremiah Kentrup, the spiritual leader of the community, tries to convince his followers that they must never give up their land despite the plague of the locusts. When the Mormons refuse to obey his order to destroy some crops in order that some others might be saved, he destroys the crops himself. The result is excommunication for Jeremiah; but just before he leaves the community, the miracle which he has promised his people happens, and the locusts leave. The members of the little community fall at Jeremiah's knees, beg to be forgiven, and invite him to stay. Jeremiah, however, having won his victory, refuses their invitation and goes on to other communities, which have greater need of his help.

After other experiences, which need not concern us, Jeremiah arrives

at the Gnadenau Mennonite settlement in Kansas. Here at the funeral of Agnes, one of the non-Mennonite characters who with her husband has drifted into Gnadenau, the story comes to some kind of a crisis. Everyone is despondent and ready to give up to the locusts, which have practically destroyed the Mennonite crops; but convinced by Jeremiah's sincerity and faith, all go back to their land. The book ends with Jeremiah's words of supreme faith in the land and the Mormon motto: "Peace with God and good will to all men."

Schrag effectively makes the life cycle of the locusts the framework of his story. The chapter headings, except for the last, which points out that, though the locusts die, men live forever, concern the locusts. All of the action of the story is portrayed against the backdrop of the locust plague, and the locusts are the motivating factors for the development of the characters in the story.

Schrag's delineation of Mennonite character and his description of a Mennonite village is somewhat erratic. Undoubtedly the best-delineated Mennonite character is Martin Miller, the pioneer leader of the Gnadenau Mennonites. He has the typical Mennonite attributes of stubbornness, industriousness, sternness, curtness, honesty, and an inflexible will to do the right as he sees it. He is not as idealized as Obadiah; consequently most Mennonites will probably prefer Obadiah. Schrag does not have the background or artistic ability to catch completely the other-worldly spirit and atmosphere of a four-hundred-year tradition present in most Mennonite leaders of the time; but he has, under the circumstances, done a commendable work in the delineation of Martin Miller. Schrag has Miller rather effectively state the attitude and spirit of the Mennonites when he has him say:

The way of the Mennonites is straight and narrow, and it has been marked out by God. One behind the other, we have been following it for generations, each in the footsteps of his father. It is a long and weary way, but the ground under our feet is firm and reliable; and the words of the Scriptures mark out our direction. They have served us well for three hundred years and our minds and hearts are slow-moving and suspicious. What has lasted for three hundred years will do well for a few years more. We are deaf and blind, . . . but the path is trodden out; we know it well and can follow it in the dark, confident that it is right and good; we need not grope or search, nor hope for signs and miracles.<sup>6</sup>

The other Mennonite characters are not as well portrayed as Miller. The young, impetuous Emil Schermer, who recommends drastic and coercive action against the Parkers, when they make trouble for the Mennonites, is hardly the kind of person who would have been in a Mennonite council in the 1807's. Lydia, the daughter of the Millers, is the most unconvincing of the Mennonite characters. She is a mixture of insanity and wisdom. She has delusions; yet, at critical moments, she exerts a steadying influence over the whole Mennonite community and is a leader among those who work to save the land from the locusts.

Schrag's description of the Mennonite country and his description

of Mennonite ways is perhaps less accurate than his characterization. Gnadenau, for example, is placed in a valley, apparently in McPherson County, Kansas; and Heinrich Bieber, who lives near Gnadenau, does his shopping in Atchison and can see the sun set behind the "rim of the Rocky Mountains" every evening. Instead of Kansas sunflowers, Schrag's land abounds in the cornflowers and poppies of Europe. There is casual talk of wheat ripening in the fall and of plowing eighteen inches deep.

Schrag's portrayal of the Mennonite pioneer and his life is, in general sympathetic. The Mennonite story of pioneer days on the prairie, their hardships, their way of life, their contributions to Kansas culture, particularly the story of Red Turkey wheat, has not been completely told by Schrag. It was not, of course, Schrag's intention to tell this story. Schrag's purpose was to use his Mennonite materials, as well as his other materials, to develop the theme that man working alone is powerless, but that man working in unity with his fellowmen can save himself. To this end Schrag's use of the Mennonite story is effective even if he does not leave the message which the Mennonite reader might wish him to leave. From a strictly literary point of view, then, Schrag cannot be criticized for his use of Mennonite materials, for they contribute to his theme. While *The Locusts* is an example of an author's attempt to make strictly literary use of Mennonite materials, it will, unfortunately, never rank high in American fiction. Until such time as a better story of the Mennonites on the prairie is written, Schrag's book will have to serve as an example of what can be done with Mennonite materials in a novel of serious purpose.

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Neither of the two previous authors were Mennonites or had a Mennonite background. The author of *Flamethrowers*,<sup>7</sup> Gordon Friesen, was born of Mennonite parents. Although Friesen himself apparently never joined the Mennonite church, his parents were both members of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Corn, Oklahoma. Despite his Mennonite background, however, Friesen's use of Mennonite materials can hardly be called sympathetic. Friesen portrays Mennonites in *Flamethrowers* much as Helen R. Martin portrays the Pennsylvania Dutch (many of whom are Mennonites), as peculiar, stupid, ignorant, and unworthy people. *Flamethrowers* brings a Mennonite family the Franzmans, from the steppes of Russia to the plains of Kansas. Friesen divides the story into four books. Book I, "Guides for an Endless Crossing," brings the Franzmans from Russia to Kansas and introduces the reader to the strange people of the Mennonite settlement of Blumenhof, near Gallawan, Kansas. After arriving at Blumenhof, Jacob, the head of the Franzman family, borrows money to buy eighty acres of worn out land with the worst buildings in the community. Blumenhof, for which the Mennonite village of Gnadenau is obviously the prototype, had been settled by Isaac Liese, the founder of this Mennonite sect, in the 1870's, when many of the Mennonites had left Russia for America.

Most of the action of the story takes place in Blumenhof, and Friesen portrays in some detail life in that pioneer Mennonite village. However, the primary interest of the story is in the growth and development of Peter, the son of Jacob and Theresa Franzman. Book II, "Stairway to the Stars," tells the story of Peter's experiences in the local grammar school and the



Gallawan High School. Book III, "Winds too Swift for Fumbling Snares," relates the hardly believable events which happen during Peter's first year at Fenrow University, a small denominational, but not Mennonite, college in Honorovia City, Oklahoma. Here he comes into contact with Miss Duane Terrison, the history teacher; and for the first time in his life he finds one who makes some effort to understand him. Her sympathetic attempt to discover what lay behind this brilliant youngster leads to something more than friendship, even though Miss Terrison is ten years Peter's senior and should have known better than to fall in love with one of her students. In Book IV, "Bow Down to Stubborn Earth," the wheel of fortune has come to a full circle. Peter comes home from Fenrow to find his father, who because of drought, recession, and poor management has lost almost all his land, a broken man. He finds the same stubborn, sullen mother with whom he has never been able to get along and whom he has learned to hate; and the same obnoxious Mennonites still gather for worship at the Blumenhof church.

Peter goes back to college for his second year, and his love affair with Duane reaches a climax. Their rebellion against the narrow attitude of Fenrow brings about the dismissal of both from the college. Peter again goes home for the summer, this time to find his father and mother living in an old shack, sick and neglected by all. Soon after Peter comes home, his mother dies a horrible death, having lost her youthful belief in heaven. Not long afterward his father dies as he is cultivating corn.

After the death of his father, Jacob, Peter goes once more to Duane, who is waiting for him; and the book ends with a philosophical discussion in which Peter finds a philosophy of life. Amazingly enough this philosophy of accepting the world as it is and yet clinging to a somewhat vague dream of honesty and humility is given to him by a mystical mother, who is always lurking about in his subconscious and who speaks words of wisdom to him from out in far-off space.

The Mennonite pioneer, like all the characters in the book, is delineated as brutal, deceitful, vicious, despicable, contemptuous, cynical, and inhuman. Jacob, who is described as a bold, obstinate, primitive male, a stupid, clumsy, pawing fool with a deep inferiority complex and an inordinate ambition, is hardly a typical Mennonite pioneer. He is a peculiar mixture of the highly emotional and stolid, the fearful and bold, the religious and the irreligious (at times he feels superior to God and the next minute he is grovelling in fear at the feet of God); he is too much a mixture of kindness and cruelty to be a clear-cut, well-drawn character. His wife, ignorant, impractical, resentful of her husband, and hating her son, is hardly a typical pioneer Mennonite mother.

Isaac Liese, the pioneer Mennonite leader, is the most unbelievable Mennonite, as well as the most unbelievable character, in the story. It hardly seems possible that a Mennonite elder could be, as Liese is, a curiously sex-hungry, seventy-year-old man who even in church cannot help looking on Theresa, for whom he has formed a romantic attachment, with longing. His thoughts run from women to war, to the loss of faith among the Mennonites since they have come to America, to God, to his own greatness, and back to women.

The minor Mennonite characters of Blumenhof are drawn in the same tone. Gottlieb Craftholt's main purpose in life is to acquire by fair means or foul (the foul means seem to give him more pleasure) every acre of land which he can get his hands on. While members of the community do not necessarily approve of his techniques, they admit that they would do the same if they were in a position to do so; and they take for granted that his avarice should not keep him from being a leader of the church. In Blumenhof there are people like Mrs. Rachting, who delights in retelling with certain embellishments all of the scandal of the little community. Somehow she is always the first to know of any untoward activities, particularly sexual irregularities, which occur in the little community. There is, of course, no dearth of material for her to talk about. There are people like twenty-nine year old Susie Gunstan, whose mother shows Susie's ugly thigh wound with some pride to all who will be edified thereby. Susie's suffering is supposed to be an effective means of scaring little boys like Peter into conversion.

All the major characters, with the exception of Peter, are despicable and degenerate. Almost all have physical blemishes to match their mental and moral perversions. All are repulsive, sickening, and obnoxious to the reader; like Solomon Mull all live in a "world of grotesque unreality!" Friesen has drawn a rogues' gallery of characters who are deceitful, vicious, contemptuous, and cynical. There are no normal human beings (and certainly no normal Mennonites) in the book.

It is quite obvious that Friesen's Mennonites are not fairly or accurately drawn. Not only the individual Mennonites but also the group as a whole is pictured as dull, stupid, apathetic, and lifeless. The following quotation is a typical example of Friesen's depiction of the group as a whole:

An air of dismal hopelessness hung over them all; it was as though they had completed their lives long ago and were merely hanging on, waiting for death. It was a strange thing that here in this religious gathering, among these men and women who professed themselves to be true followers of the Creator of all life, heirs of a close companionship with that Creator for which their ancestors had waded through blood, and fought, unremittingly for centuries, among these men and women who believed themselves closer than any other group of humans to that powerful regenerative force, there should exist such an atmosphere of exhausted and irrecoverable mankind. The people were almost sullen in their lethargy of spirit. Their clothes, their tones of speech, their few actions, their faces and hands, showed nothing of a creative, joyous life, nothing of a love and respect for creation, but rather a sour, total disinterest, a mistrust of life, and a decision, as though in spite, to live it as dully as possible . . . . It would have been difficult to find a group of men and women anywhere so devoid of all evidence of joy, so devoid of all zest for living, so devoid of all spirit.<sup>8</sup>

In fairness to Friesen it must be pointed out that *Flamethrowers* is a product of its time. It was written like many novels of the 1930's as a criticism of the generally accepted romantic ideals of small-town and

farm life. Friesen subjects the ideals, mores, and customs of his time to a searching criticism. Like other novelists of the time Friesen tries to lay bare the follies, foolishness, stupidity, shortsightedness, incompetence, and ineptitude of mankind. It was not Friesen's purpose to write a sympathetic picture of Mennonite pioneer life. Instead he used a Mennonite community as a picture of the whole world, which like Blumenhof is cruel, greedy, and selfish. Unfortunately, however, Friesen fails to make this point very clear. Most readers of *Flamethrowers* assume, as do the editors of the *Book Review Digest*, that the pivotal points of interest in the novel are "Peter's parents, background, environment, and the Russian-German community."<sup>9</sup>

Essentially, however, Friesen's purpose is to show the problems which a young man of high ideals has in adjusting himself to a world which is inhumane, brutal, greedy, and selfish. To illustrate Peter's difficulties in adjusting to a greedy world Friesen makes both the Mennonite and the non-Mennonite world avaricious. No one can have any objections to Friesen's theme, for it is unfortunately true that man's inhumanity to man is all too prevalent in the world; but there are certainly many communities in the world which would lend themselves much better to a depiction of that theme than a Mennonite community. It is a weakness of Friesen's novel that he should choose to illustrate his theme by using a group who for four hundred years have been known for their emphasis on brotherly love and mutual aid. Schrag's theme that man must cooperate is much more adequately portrayed by a Mennonite community. It would have been to Friesen's credit if he had chosen a different theme for his novel or a different setting to illustrate his theme. It is poor taste to use any particular religious, cultural, racial, or ethnic group for themes of this nature. Friesen would have been more successful had he made his community an anonymous one.

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In direct contrast to Friesen's picture of the Mennonites is that given by Vachel Lindsay in *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty*,<sup>10</sup> published in 1914. Lindsay's book is not a novel, but it makes an interesting comparison, for his visit to Kansas came in 1912, the date of the action of *Flamethrowers*. While it must be pointed out that Lindsay does not describe the specific branch of the Mennonite church which Friesen treats in *Flamethrowers*, essentially they were much alike, particularly in their farm life and in their religious beliefs. The difference in their outward mores and culture patterns is too slight to invalidate a comparison. It must be noted, too, that the purpose of the two writers is not the same: Friesen is writing a novel and uses Mennonite materials to suit his own ends; Lindsay has no purpose other than to describe his adventures while preaching the "Gospel of Beauty."

Lindsay saw the Mennonites through entirely different eyes from Friesen. For Lindsay the task of helping the Mennonites harvest their wheat was an inspiring one, and his report of the Mennonites is a highly idyllic one. He thinks that a "sturdy Mennonite devotee marching with a great bundle of wheat under each arm and reaching for a third makes a picture indeed, an essay on sunshine beyond the brush of any impressionist."

Instead of picturing the Mennonite people as avaricious and selfish,



as examples of man's inhumanity to man, Lindsay describes the Mennonites as a "dear people," as opposed to carnal literature as Lindsay was opposed to tailor-made clothes, people who hold to their ancient verities and over whose meditations antiquity broods. Instead of the dull, stupid Mennonite characters, Lindsay pictures them as wise, frugal, but not stingy, farmers who do not know about the outside world, not because they are too ignorant to be interested in such things as war and politics, but whose interest in religion leaves them no time for such things as politics or baseball. Instead of picturing the Mennonite leaders as mystical, unreal, old, sex-hungry, uneducated, and uncultured men, Lindsay gives them credit for no lack of thought in their system. After attending one of their quarterly conferences and listening to their discourses on the distinctions among the four gospels, Lindsay concluded that the Mennonite clergy were scholars.

Lindsay found no counterpart for the irascible Jacob in the Mennonite community which he visited. Instead, he describes the calm patriarchs as men who have a feeling of security which Friesen himself would envy. The maladjusted, neurotic Peter is not to be found in Lindsay's Mennonite community; instead there is the son of the old Mennonite who carries himself with proper dignity as heir of the farm, a credit to his father. In short, Lindsay takes a much more idyllic view of the Mennonite pioneer than Friesen. Personally I prefer Lindsay's Mennonites.

Another factual description of the Mennonite pioneer in Kansas is to be found in two articles in Nobel L. Prentis' book, *Kansas Miscellanies*,<sup>11</sup> reprinted in another part of this book. Prentis' picture of the Mennonites is much like Lindsay's. He sees in them a progressive group of farmers, a valuable addition to the Kansas prairie. The articles contain delightful and good factual descriptions of visits to early Mennonite settlements in Kansas, and as such are a valuable source of information as a non-Mennonite impression of the Mennonite pioneer.

For many years a best seller on the American book market, Arthur E. Hertzler's *Horse and Buggy Doctor*<sup>12</sup> also deals with some phases of Mennonite pioneer life on the prairies. Dr. Hertzler, himself of Mennonite background, relates in this book of memoirs his youth and later extensive experience as a country doctor at Halstead, Kansas. Aided and inspired by some Mennonite pioneers, such as Christian Krehbiel, Daniel Haury, and Joe Goering, he established a hospital in Halstead which gained national renown. Many of his patients were Mennonites of the Halstead, Moundridge, and Newton communities and he learned to know both the good as well as the undesirable traits of the Mennonite pioneer on the Kansas prairie. With homely humor and pungent satire Hertzler describes his medical career relating many experiences with patients under the primitive conditions of fifty years ago, making the book, as its jacket publicity puts it, ". . . the honest stuff of American life—wonderfully illuminating and genuinely exciting."

Marie J. Regier's one-act comedy *But Mother*<sup>13</sup>—depicts to some degree pioneer conditions in a Mennonite community in Kansas. Gustav comes home from college and disturbs the peace of the home atmosphere by revealing that he has fallen in love with an English girl. Gustav's sister,

Kate, is sympathetic and agrees to use her good offices to influence Mother favorably. Later, in the absence of all but Mother, Margery, Gustav's fiancée arrives and, although her identity is at first mistaken, she succeeds in winning Mother's affection. When the confusion is cleared, Mother finally accepts Margery in spite of her great affection for her German Mennonite heritage and her equally determined resistance to the English. The play thus dramatizes the period of adjustment and transition from the German to the English.

An account such as Edward E. Hirschler's *The Story of a Pioneer Family*,<sup>14</sup> while it is purportedly a literary study, is little more than an extended essay. Mr. Hirschler does little more than relate the story of his father and mother, the Reverend and Mrs. C. E. Hirschler, and their pioneer life in Harvey and Hodgeman counties, Kansas, and Noble County, in the Cherokee Strip, Oklahoma. While Hirschler has taken pains to relate accurately the conditions of pioneer life on the prairie, thus contributing to our knowledge of Mennonite pioneer conditions and incidentally revealing Mennonite pioneer character, his study is more of a social history of one particular family than a literary study. It is as a factual account of the early struggle of the Mennonites against the elements and their bravery in the face of great odds that Hirschler's account is valuable. A collection such as *Pioneers in Profile*,<sup>15</sup> a project in creative writing by Bethel College English students, is also valuable for the information it gives about individual Mennonite pioneers. The literary value of the works needs no comment other than to say that the authors of the biographies were college freshmen.

There are, as a survey of *Reader's Guide* and other magazine indexes reveals, numerous factual magazine articles, as well as other books, concerning early pioneer Mennonite life. They are two numerous to mention.

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The Mennonite pioneer in Canada has also been used as material for *belles-lettres*. Perhaps the most famous use of the Mennonite in Canadian fiction, and perhaps the least known, is in Frederick Philip Grove's novel, *Our Daily Bread*.<sup>16</sup> Grove's use of the Mennonite in his fiction is important because of his importance in Canadian fiction. Many critics of Canadian letters regard Grove as one of the two or three most important novelists of that country. Unfortunately it is difficult to determine the exact Mennonite materials in Grove's novels, for he Anglicized the names of his Mennonite characters and settings. Grove himself was not a Mennonite but was born of a Swedish father and a Scottish mother in Russia in 1871. He spent much of his life wandering in all parts of the world, especially working as a harvest hand from Oklahoma to Manitoba, finally settling in the provinces of Canada where he became a teacher. It was here that he came into contact with the Mennonites, and while he was teaching in Winkler, he married a Mennonite, Miss Katherine Wiens, the primary class teacher there. Victor Peters<sup>17</sup> points out that some local authorities claim that the Elliotts in Grove's novel, *Our Daily Bread*, are modeled on the family of Grove's wife. In a letter Peters further points out that he recently visited a small Mennonite town, Lowe Farm, Saskatchewan, and found that characters in the novel were familiar to a number of the residents there. The novel moves between Lowe Farm and Rush Lake,

Saskatchewan, the home of Mrs. Grove's parents. These names, however, are disguised in the novel. Grove's own experiences with the Mennonites he relates in his autobiography *In Search of Myself*.<sup>18</sup>

An attempt to depict the pioneer Mennonite and his problems in drama form is *Kanadische Mennoniten: Bunte Bilder aus dem 50 jaehrigen Siedlerleben*.<sup>19</sup> Written in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the coming of the Mennonites to the prairies of Canada, the author attempts to depict Mennonite growth and development from 1874 to the fiftieth anniversary of the coming of the Mennonites, 1924. The first scene depicts a pioneer Canadian Mennonite home in the winter of 1875. Reimer, one of the pioneer immigrants, is sick. Despite his serious condition, however, his neighbors, including Nickel, the veterinarian, joke about death. The scene, strangely enough, ends with Reimer's death. In the second scene, which takes place two months later at Christmas, Krahn, a Mennonite settler from a neighboring community, who has recently lost his wife, wins the hand of Mrs. Reimer. The prayer of the Reimer children for a father for Christmas eve is thus answered.

The remainder of the scenes are unrelated to the first two and to each other. In the third scene, which occurs in 1896, a group of Mennonites discuss the request of the Canadian government for closer supervision of Mennonite schools. While the young people favor cooperation with the government, the older people are afraid that such cooperation would bring disastrous results, namely, the introduction of the English language into the schools and complete regulation by the government of the schools. No action is taken by the body.

The occasion for the fourth scene, the birthday of Grandfather Wiebe, which takes place in 1919, gives the author an opportunity to discuss further the problems of adjustment which Mennonites faced in Canada. Heinrich Goertz, the grandson of Wiebe, speaks his mind about the necessity for more education and culture among the Mennonites. The problem of language again comes up, and Goertz argues that Mennonites know neither English nor German.

In the fifth scene members of a Mennonite church have just listened to a report by representatives of Russian Mennonites in regard to conditions among the Mennonites there after the revolution. The Russian Mennonites plead for help to migrate to Canada. There are opinions on both sides, but the general opinion is that they should be given as much help as possible.

The final scene is a wedding scene and takes place in 1924 after many of the Russian Mennonites have migrated to Canada. A recent immigrant from Russia and a daughter of one of the older settlers are being married. A Russian and a Canadian minister speak, and both plead for cooperation and understanding between the two groups. The wedding is represented as symbolic of possible cooperation.

While Mennonite pioneer materials are used in the play, they are not made to function very effectively. The reader is told about the problems of the new immigrants on the bleak prairies, but he is never made to feel



the full import of these sufferings. No effective characterization of a Mennonite pioneer is possible because no character is seen in more than a few situations. The Mennonite pioneer and his problems on the prairie—the bitter cold of the Canadian winter, the wolves, the poverty, the crop failures, sickness—are present in this play, but they give the reader little more than a superficial and hasty picture of the people and the time. Mennonite pioneer materials are ostensibly used to write a drama; however, the result is little more than an essay spoken by puppets on the stage. In fact, the materials would have been more effective in an essay.

Arnold Dyck, perhaps the most prolific and the best of the Mennonite writers today, makes use of Mennonite pioneer characters and situations in some of his low-German stories. The setting of his *Koop enn Bua* <sup>20</sup> stories in the brush country of southeast Manitoba near the Red River, while they take place in recent times, are in a sense a depiction of pioneer Mennonite conditions. Dyck effectively pictures the wild, brushy, rocky country in which his *struckforma* live, as Rousseau suggested, close to nature. Here among the brush and rocks of Manitoba these farmers sow wheat, rye, oats, and garden crops to eke out a meager living. In the winter they cut wood to sell, and they catch brush rabbits by the ton. In comparison to their richer neighbors, the wheat farmers just north of them, Dyck's characters are pioneers.

Dyck's characters, moreover, have a pioneering spirit. His four friends, Jasch Bua, Isaak Koop, Jaun Toews, and Peeta Wiens, are unacquainted with the niceties of civilization, except for the automobile, which they use to make their trips to various parts of Canada and the northern United States. Dyck makes effective use of his pioneer Mennonite characters, both for humorous situations and for gentle satire. Jasch Bua, the pudgy, talkative, friendly but opinionated, fifty year old; Isaak Koop, the lanky, quiet counterpart of Bua; John Toews, the large, willing, deliberate, pipe-smoking man; and Peeta Wiens, the quiet somewhat strange Russian who had had gruesome experiences in the Russian Revolution are all pioneer Mennonite characters who are brought to life by Dyck's pen. In fact, Arnold Dyck, more than any other author, has succeeded in catching the spirit of Mennonitism and delineating Mennonite character.

In connection with the Mennonite pioneer in Canada it might be mentioned that Paul Hiebert in his essay, *Sarah Binks*, <sup>21</sup> obviously a satire against a certain kind of useless literary scholarship, may have drawn from his Mennonite background in depicting his Saskatchewan poetess, Sara Binks.

In passing, a word should be said about poetry. Mennonites have written poetry, but no serious consideration has been given to pioneer Mennonite conditions in their poetry. Although some Mennonite poets have attained some eminence in Canada, most of their work has been limited to nature themes and religious considerations. References to pioneer conditions have been little more than incidental; and, in general, poetry concerned with pioneer conditions has been inferior. <sup>22</sup> Non-Mennonites, moreover, have not made use of Mennonite pioneer materials in poetry. C. Henry

Smith, quotes a folk poem, "The Mennon Bold," <sup>23</sup> which grew up in Canada soon after the Mennonites settled there but it is merely a ditty.

\* \* \*

A study of the use of the Mennonite pioneer in American and Canadian literature reveals several interesting facts. One of the most obvious of these facts is that writers of American and Canadian literature have not made use of the Mennonite pioneer materials to any great extent. Only four novels, none of any great and permanent literary value, have been published during the seventy-five years that the Mennonites have lived on the American prairies. Only one of these novels was written by an author of Mennonite background, and that novel is the least sympathetic with Mennonite views and gives the least representative picture of Mennonite life and character.

Mennonite pioneer materials, as well as Mennonite materials in general, should receive more attention in the future than they have in the past. As a small isolated, peculiar, rural group newly arrived from Russia with a different and distinct set of mores, folkways, and culture patterns, the Mennonites should appear to the writer of local color fiction as the Amish and the Pennsylvania Dutch have appealed to local color writers. As a religious group believing in simplicity of life, nonconformity with the world, and nonparticipation in war, they should appeal to the serious writer of fiction who is interested in doing more than merely describing and portraying a peculiar kind of life. The contributions of the Mennonites to the culture of the prairies, notably the introduction of Red Turkey wheat and their successful farming methods, should interest the writers of novels of rural life. Their long trek from the steppes of Russia to the plains of the United States and Canada should serve as material for a novel similar to Vardis Fisher's story of the Mormons, *Children of God*. No novel has as yet attempted to catch the heroic atmosphere of the journey from Russia to the United States and Canada; nor has any novel been completely successful in telling the story of the early pioneer years on the prairie states.

The greatest value of the use of Mennonite pioneer materials in literature is its value as social history, not as literature. The novels and the prose descriptions concerning the Mennonite pioneer give a fairly accurate account of Mennonite life on the prairies. Friesen, of course, is an exception and gives a distorted and inexact picture. But even as social history the novels are not complete. Friesen's Blumenhof is not a Mennonite community, and the treatments of Schrag, Fontane, and Grove are too brief and cover only surface matters. They still leave much to be desired. It is unfortunate that no Mennonite has written a novel from a Mennonite point of view about the American Mennonites as Mennonites, notably Peter Epp in *Eine Mutter* and Arnold Dyck in *Verloren in der Steppe*, have written novels concerning Mennonite life and character in Russia. Moreover, none of the novels we have considered has been completely successful in piercing into the American Mennonite soul. While Obadiah and Martin Miller have some of the attributes of the Mennonite patriarch, they still fall short of what might be done. The Mennonite writer still faces the important task of interpreting the soul of his people both to Mennonites and to non-Mennonites.

# FOOTNOTES:

1. Theodor Fontane, **Quitt** (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1902).
2. **Monatsblaetter aus Bethel College**, VIII (August, 1903), p. 88;  
VIII (May, 1903), pp. 52-53;  
VIII (June, 1903), pp. 64-65; and  
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3. Elizabeth Horsch Bender, **The Mennonites in German Literature**, (unpublished master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1944).
4. A. J. F. Zieglschmid, "Truth and Fiction and Mennonites in the Second Part of Fontane's Novel **Quitt**: The Indian Territory, "**The Mennonite Quarterly Review**, XVI (October, 1942), pp. 223-246. See also Ernst Correll's article on "Fontane" in **Mennonitisches Lexikon** (Frankfurt am Main and Weierhof; Selbstverlag der Herausgeber, (1913 ff.). Vol. I, p. 661.
5. Otto Schrag, **The Locusts**. Translated by Richard Winston (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1943).
6. **Ibid.**, p. 537.
7. Gordon Friesen, **Flamethrowers** (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1936).
8. **Ibid.**, p. 213.
9. Mertice James and Dorothy Brown, eds., **Book Review Digest, 1936** (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1937), p. 363.
10. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, **Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty** (New York: Mitchell Kennerley (1914).
11. Noble L. Prentis, **Kansas Miscellanies** (Topeka: The Kansas Publishing House, 1889).
12. Arthur E. Hertzler, **The Horse and Buggy Doctor** (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1938).
13. Marie J. Regier, **But Mother—A one act-comedy** (Samuel French, New York, N.Y. 1940).
14. Edward E. Hirschler, **The Story of a Pioneer Family**, a mimeographed master's thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1937.
15. **Pioneers in Profile**, Vol. I and II, (North Newton, Kansas: mimeographed, 1945).
16. **Our Daily Bread—A novel**, Frederick Philip Grove (New York: MacMillan, 1928).
17. Victor Peters, "Frederick Philip Grove," **Manitoba School Journal**, IX (October, 1946) pp. 6-7.
18. Frederick Philip Grove, **In Search of Myself** (New York: MacMillan, 1946).
19. Novokampus (pseu.), **Kanadische Mennoniten** (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Rundschau Publishing House, 1925).
20. Up to date Arnold Dyck has published three books in this series. They are: Arnold Dyck, **Koop enn Bua op Reise** (Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada: published by the author, Part I, 1942; Part II, 1943). **Koop enn Bua foare noa Toronto**, published in 1948, is a continuation of the adventures of the four friends.
21. Paul Hiebert, **Sara Binks**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).
22. Much of the poetry concerning the Mennonite pioneer can be found in the **Mennonitische Warte**, edited and published by Arnold Dyck at Steinbach, Manitoba from 1935-38.
23. C. Henry Smith, **The Coming of the Russian Mennonites** (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1927), pp. 190-191.





## Related Literature

Readers of *From the Steppes to the Prairies* lament the passing of the well-known Mennonite historian, C. Henry Smith. The day before his passing last October he wrote to the Mennonite Publication Office authorizing a revision of his life-work, *The Story of the Mennonites*, suggesting that the editorship of this task be entrusted to Cornelius Krahn.

This new and revised edition of *The Story of the Mennonites* is now in the press and will be available in the near future. Besides bringing the entire account up to date, the editor and his co-workers have freed the text from some errors and misprints, added a bibliography, and an extensive index, and have illustrated the book.

Another book by C. Henry Smith that deserves particularly wide reading at this time is his *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites*, published in 1927. This book of almost three hundred pages is written in Smith's intimate and fascinating style and takes the reader from the ancestral home in Prussia to the land of the czars and then to the prairie states and provinces, concluding with the experiences of the Russian Mennonites in the first World War.

The theme of the coming of the Mennonites to America some seventy-five years ago is also given particular attention in current issues of *Mennonite Life*, the quarterly illustrated magazine published in the interest of the best in the religious, social, and economic phases of Mennonite culture. The July and October issues feature such historical articles and more will be offered in the January, 1950, issue. All back copies and bound volumes of the first three years of publication are still available from the publishers. Subscriptions may begin with any issue at \$2.00 per year, or, if entered directly with the publishers, may be secured at the special rates of two years for \$3.50, and three years for \$5.00. Address all correspondence: *Mennonite Life*, North Newton, Kansas.

To secure the books by C. Henry Smith or back copies of *Mennonite Life* and single subscriptions, Address:

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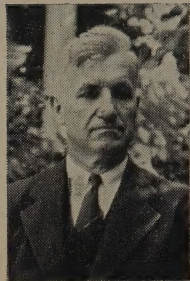
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Lester Hostetler is minister of the Bethel College Church, North Newton, Kansas. Born at Sugarcreek, Ohio, April 25, 1892, he was educated at Goshen College (A.B.), Union Theological Seminary (B.D.), and Oberlin School of Theology.

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He studied music and hymnology in college and seminary, and in addition to the work of the pastorate, taught music classes in public schools and churches, and for a number of years directed community oratorio societies.

Mr. Hostetler is a member of the Hymn Society of America and served as coeditor of *The Mennonite Hymnary*.

One of the best hymnbooks of recent years is the one published by the Mennonites, a grand collection of the solid hymns of the church with a good, but not disproportionate, representation of hymns and chorals of German origin. The present handbook gives data about both the words and the music of each number in this book, facts about authors and composers, and helpful suggestions concerning interpretation and use, all very concisely stated and with no sentimental gush. The German originals are given, and in at least one case a Greek original, of translated hymns. Since a great part of the material in the MENNONITE HYMNARY is common to all standard collections, the handbook will be a value to those who use other hymnbooks.—*The Christian Century*, June 29, 1949.

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